

CJR

COLUMBIA
JOURNALISM
REVIEW

MAY/JUNE 2006
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MIND GAMES

*How the information war
distorts reality and
pollutes the news*

Daniel Schulman



GAY TALESE AND HIS CURIOUS MEMOIR

Robert S. Boynton

BACK STORY: HOW FAR WILL A WRITER GO FOR HIS BOOK?

Jacques Leslie

'GREAT BOOM-BOOM!': A SALUTE TO TV'S INTREPID CAMERAMEN

Jim Wooten

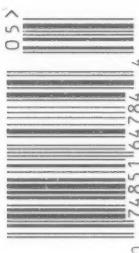
THE MURDERS A CRIME REPORTER CAN'T FORGET

Wendell Jamieson

LISTEN TO THIS: THE WEB'S FOREMOST MUSICAL TASTEMAKER

Kiera Butler

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KATRINA: THE STORM WE'VE ALWAYS FEARED
The Times-Picayune
FRIDAY, AUGUST 24, 2001
MOSCARELLO EDITION

CATASTROPHIC

STORM SURGE SWAMPS 9TH WARD, ST. BERNARD
LAKEVIEW LEVEE BREACH THREATENS TO INUNDATE CITY

Flooding wipes out two communities

After the mighty storm came the rising water

KATRINA: THE STORM WE'VE ALWAYS FEARED
The Times-Picayune
UNDER WATER

LAKEVIEW LEVEE BREACH SWAMPS CITY FROM LAKE TO RIVER

Population urged to leave; years of cleanup ahead

Daylong efforts to repair levee fail

KATRINA: THE STORM WE'VE ALWAYS FEARED
The Times-Picayune
'HELP US, PLEASE'

AFTER THE DISASTER, CHAOS AND LAWLESSNESS RULE THE STREETS

Local leaders call relief efforts too little, too late

Blanco: Around the Islands of Tops

KATRINA: THE STORM WE'VE ALWAYS FEARED
The Times-Picayune
WHERE THEY DIED

Nash 26-mixed review

KATRINA: THE STORM WE'VE ALWAYS FEARED
The Times-Picayune
CITY OF DARKNESS

Corps may not get the job done as key canal

Planners propose bigger jazzfest

FINALIST IN THE COMMENTARY CATEGORY

The judges recognized columnist **Chris Rose** for his “vibrant and compassionate columns that gave voice to the afflictions of his city.”

OPENING SHOT



ANTRIM CASKEY

Perception and Reality

High gasoline prices and war in the Middle East have handed the coal industry a golden moment, the likes of which it hasn't seen in twenty-five years. As Jeff Goodell explains in his new book, *Big Coal* (review, page 67), the industry responded by reframing coal as the "clean," homegrown answer to America's anxious energy future. The reality is less tidy. We know this thanks to journalists like Goodell and the editors at *Grist* magazine (page 17), with their recent series on poverty and the environment: mountaintop-removal mining is destroying ecosystems, making people sick, and literally reshaping central Appalachia. The struggle to frame reality is at the center of our cover story, too, in which Daniel Schulman dissects the Bush administration's aggressive global information war and the risks it poses for the credibility of both the military and the press. Robert S. Boynton pulls the covers off a different sort of reality — the decidedly unromantic, messy reality of writing — in his essay on Gay Talese's curious new antimemoir, *A Writer's Life*, and Jim Wooten takes us behind the lens of the TV camera to meet the gutsy men and women who bring history into our living rooms. Enjoy. **CR**

Brutally efficient mountaintop-removal mines, such as this one in West Virginia, are transforming hundreds of square miles of forest into moonscape.



CONTENTS

MAY/JUNE 2006

"To assess the performance of journalism . . . to help stimulate continuing improvement in the profession, and to speak out for what is right, fair, and decent."

—From the founding editorial, 1961

ARTICLES

OUT OF TIME A journalist set out to teach basic reporting to a group of prison inmates, and got a new appreciation for what it means to miss a deadline. By Bruce Porter **26**

THE CAMERAMEN We remember the images they provide, but seldom consider the gutsy pros whom TV news couldn't do without. By Jim Wooten **32**

MIND GAMES In the amorphous 'war on terror,' the government's strategy to frame reality often distorts it, and puts the credibility of the military and the press at risk. By Daniel Schulman **38**

BACK STORY A book tour was not what the doctor ordered, but for this writer, pain, pills, and debilitating side effects were worth the trip. By Jacques Leslie **50**

LISTEN TO THIS In little more than a decade *Pitchfork* has gone from a labor of love to the Web's foremost musical tastemaker. By Kiera Butler **53**

COMMENTARY

EDITORIAL Whether it's AIDS or Iraq, context is key. **4**

VOICES Mike Hoyt pays to place his mother's obit, but he's not happy about it. **13**
Former police reporter Bob Kochersberger reconsiders reporting 101 after reading about his son's crime.

DARTS & LAURELS Softballs for Cheney, an affair to forget, extreme makeover at CBS, and more. **16**
By Gloria Cooper

STATE OF THE ART Redefining environmental coverage at *Grist* magazine. By Kevin Friedl **17**

FIRST PERSON For a former New York City police reporter, a grim landmark lurks around many a corner. By Wendell Jamieson **19**

SCENE In China, first the interrogation, then lunch. By Ralph Jennings **72**

IDEAS & REVIEWS

ESSAY Robert S. Boynton on Gay Talese's curious new memoir. **57**

SECOND READ Chris Lehmann on *Do You Sincerely Want to Be Rich?* and how three enterprising reporters cracked a bohemian broker's scam. **62**

REVIEW *Big Coal: The Dirty Secret Behind America's Energy Future* by Jeff Goodell. **67**
Reviewed by Susan Q. Stranahan

BOOK REPORTS By James Boylan **69**

PASSAGES *Desperate Networks* by Bill Carter; *Let Me Finish* by Roger Angell; **70**
Party of the Century by Deborah Davis; *Lipstick on a Pig* by Torie Clarke

DEPARTMENTS

OPENING SHOT **1** **LETTERS** **5** **AWARDS** **8** **CURRENTS** **18**
THE AMERICAN NEWSROOM **24** **THE LOWER CASE** **INSIDE BACK COVER**

COVER: STEPHEN KRONINGER

"The compromise here was we'll fund your newspaper, mister Iraqi editor, but you may have to run coalition information."

—A Marine public affairs officer, "Mind Games," p. 38

*In recognition of journalism
that has made a difference.*



**CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WASHINGTON POST'S
2006 PULITZER PRIZE WINNERS:**

INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING — Susan Schmidt, R. Jeffrey Smith and James V. Grimaldi

"For their indefatigable probe of Washington lobbyist Jack Abramoff that exposed congressional corruption and produced reform efforts."

BEAT REPORTING — Dana Priest

"For her persistent, painstaking reports on secret 'black site' prisons and other controversial features of the government's counterterrorism campaign."

EXPLANATORY REPORTING — David Finkel

"For his ambitious, clear-eyed case study of the United States government's attempt to bring democracy to Yemen."

CRITICISM — Robin Givhan

"For her witty, closely observed essays that transform fashion criticism into cultural criticism."



Susan Schmidt



R. Jeffrey Smith



James V. Grimaldi



Dana Priest



David Finkel



Robin Givhan

**CONGRATULATIONS ALSO TO THE WASHINGTON POST'S
PULITZER PRIZE NOMINATED FINALISTS:**

PUBLIC SERVICE — The Washington Post

"For its exhaustive and illuminating exploration of the government's war on terrorism and the ensuing tension between national security and individual liberty."

INTERNATIONAL — Steve Fainaru

"For his powerful accounts of the deadly violence faced by ordinary American soldiers in Iraq as an insurgency intensified."

The Washington Post

To read the award-winning submissions from The Washington Post, visit washingtonpost.com

EDITORIAL

ON CONTEXT

AIDS

Lewis Lapham, who recently stepped down as editor of *Harper's* magazine after twenty-eight years, has long displayed a special disdain for the mainstream press. In the May 2005 issue, he wrote: "Far from being scornful of the messages blown through the trumpets of doom, the news media make a show of their civility and a virtue of their silence; here to please and not to think; every American free to worship the reflection of his or her own fear; no superstition more deserving than another, no imbecile vision in the desert that can't be sold to a talk show, a circus, or the Republican caucus in the House of Representatives."

Lapham was referring to the press's context-free rendering of the National Association of Evangelicals' plan to inject its faith even deeper into American politics. His comments apply just as easily to his own magazine's handling of Celia Farber's piece on AIDS in its March 2006 issue. For the last fifteen years, Farber has been among the loudest proponents of the notion, put forth primarily by a lone virologist, Peter Duesberg, that the HIV virus does not cause AIDS. In her *Harper's* piece, Farber executes a jarring bait-and-switch, devoting most of the first three-quarters of her fifteen-page article to a well-reported examination of a horribly botched AIDS drug trial in Uganda, before veering off into her

well-worn rant about how conventional wisdom on AIDS is the product of a conspiracy between greedy scientists and their benefactors, the pharmaceutical companies.

Under Lapham, *Harper's* has made great sport of ridiculing all manner of establishment thinking, so publishing Farber is not entirely out of character. What is out of character, especially in light of Lapham's routine swipes at his brethren in the press for what he sees as their infuriating weakness for stenography and intellectual dishonesty, is that Farber was allowed to argue her cause without wrestling — even a little bit — with the mountain of scientific evidence to the contrary. If someone unschooled in the AIDS debate were to read the piece, he would assume that Duesberg is the only right-thinking man in the scientific community. Yet, as far back as 1994, the journal *Science* published a thorough investigation of Duesberg's claims and found the evidence for them unpersuasive. Many of Duesberg's so-called supporters quoted in that investigation said they did not so much believe in his ideas as in his right to dissent.

Farber, too, is entitled to dissent. But when dissent morphs into an "imbecile vision in the desert," as it does in her *Harper's* article, then the editors owe their readers the courtesy of being a little less civil, a little less silent.

Iraq

Asimilarly willful suppression of crucial context underlies the contention — reinvigorated in late March by a White House p.r. offensive — that the press is ignoring the good news out of Iraq in favor of the bad. Such a suggestion is an affront to those reporters who are risking life and limb to cover this story, particularly when it comes from an armchair flamethrower like Hugh Hewitt.

Hewitt, a blogger and radio host, posted this on his Web site on March 21: "The MSM [mainstream media] wants Bush to fail, and as a result MSM's coverage of Iraq tilts to the IEDs and the terrorist successes and never, ever provides the context that the president did in the press conference today."

Really? If we look outside our windows and see a school being rebuilt on one end of the street and a school bus on fire at the other, which would Hewitt have us run to cover? For a civil society to function, it must have basic services and security, and if it doesn't, that's news by any standard. Consider some of the context from Iraq the president failed to mention: oil production, electricity production, and the availability of household fuel are all lower than they were two years ago. The number of Iraqi civilians killed has more than tripled in that period, as have the estimated numbers of insurgents and foreign terrorists at work. And 87 percent of Iraqis say they want a concrete timeline for a U.S. withdrawal.

Indeed, let's have *all* the context in Iraq. CJR

LETTERS

PHILADELPHIA STORY

Michael Shapiro has put together a superb short history of the decisions and oversights that have brought *The Philadelphia Inquirer* to the position it finds itself in today (CJR, March/April).

While Shapiro's vision is comprehensive and his understanding of the impact of editing decisions upon the bottom line is acute, he has overlooked the failures of a succession of publishers to understand ways to market, distribute, and sell advertising in the newspaper. The newspaper failed to market itself, failed to establish a presence in Philadelphia in the way, say, that *The Boston Globe* is part of that city's identity.

During the paper's Golden Age, its publisher failed to build on its reputation by increasing visibility in the community — sponsoring bike races, marathons, the Phillies, restaurant festivals, philanthropic projects, Fourth of July events, etc. At one time, its spokesman on commercials was none other than Leslie Nielsen, an actor known not for credibility or gravitas but for playing the buffoon. The paper also made a short-lived and ill-conceived alliance with a newly formed, underfunded UHF channel's nightly TV news program. Its salaried advertising staff was known for its long lunches and passive, sleepy attitude. Part of the blame for this must be shared by the union, which fought efforts to move to a commission sales reimbursement strategy. The newspaper's editors' and publishers' failure to understand the moneymaking potential of the Internet continues to this day. I recall a conversation with a publisher more than ten years ago in which I suggested turning the classifieds into an auction along the lines of eBay, a suggestion that was laughed at. The culture of the place was one of standing on your heels, in terms of making money — the exact opposite of its culture in terms of pursuing stories.



All of this said, the newspaper still contains enough talent, and lies within a city diverse and vital enough, to produce journalism worthy of its past accomplishments, should its leadership have the vision to understand the huge moneymaking opportunities presented by the Internet and other media; the judgment to hire the right staff; and the attitude to approach its region with point of view or "voice" to stir and serve its readers.

Henry Goldman
New York, New York

The writer was the *Inquirer's* national correspondent in New York from 1982 to 1999.

I cannot vouch for the facts in the rest of the CJR article about *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, but you got several things wrong about my time as editor there.

1. That a story becomes newsroom folklore and thereby gets reported in the local alternative press does not make it a fact. The anonymous allegation in your article that I was watching *Judging Amy* on the night of a primary is untrue. Surely you teach your students to give the poor fellow being slammed in their articles a chance to deny any allegations against him.

2. I did not get permission to hire some forty new staffers; I looked at the

existing budget and found enough money to hire some forty journalists, the first substantial increase in new reporting blood at the *Inquirer* in more than a decade. We also added more reporting jobs by reducing the number of people with "managing editor" in their job title from eleven to five and converting twenty-five desk jobs to reporting jobs. Were all those people happy about the changes? Not exactly.

3. While most of those positions were invested in the suburbs, you left out the fact that five of them were assigned to the previously uncovered neighborhoods of Philadelphia, one went to increase the staffing of the investigative team and another went to create a "business of sports" job.

Your article seemed long enough to have included these facts. Can you tell me why it didn't?

Walker Lundy
Sherrills Ford, North Carolina

The editors respond: By no means did Michael Shapiro rely on "folklore" or the alternative press for anything in his piece. That said, we should have asked him to call Lundy for comment, and are sorry that we did not.

MEMOIR METHODS

Samuel G. Freedman says that a few years ago at a writers' conference I "let slip" that I had "fabricated" a number of scenes in my memoir, *Fierce Attachments* (CJR, March/April). He's wrong on both counts: I didn't let anything slip, and I never said I had fabricated. I did say that in my book I had, on a number of occasions, made a composite out of the elements of two or more incidents — none of which had been fabricated — for the purpose of moving the narrative forward. These words were not something I let slip — it never occurred to me that such practices would not be seen as entirely within the province of the memoirist. I had said them times

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COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW

without number, at other talks and readings, and in nearly every class I ever taught. To my amazement, they were taken as a "confession," and a student in the audience rushed to send the scandalous news off to Salon.com. Whereupon (as I wrote in my response to *Salon*) a Washington book critic was subsequently allowed to denounce me on NPR's "Fresh Air" as "the latest culprit . . . in a series of similar revelations," comparing me with Benjamin Wilkomirski, Doris Kearns Goodwin, and Jayson Blair.

The giveaway here is this trio of names I, a memoirist who composed (composed, mind you, not invented) a narrative drawn entirely from the materials of my own experience, was being compared to a psychopath who spun a Holocaust memoir out of whole cloth; a historian accused of incorporating other people's work into her own without attribution; a dishonest newspaper reporter who substantially made up the stories he sent in to *The New York Times*. It seems to me that these inappropriate analogies are proof, if proof were needed, that memoir writing is a genre still in need of an informed readership.

To state the case briefly: memoirs belong to the category of literature, not of journalism. It is a misunderstanding to read a memoir as though the writer owes the reader the same record of literal accuracy that is owed in newspaper reporting or in literary journalism. A memoir is a tale taken from life — that is, from actual not imagined occurrences — and related (interpreted) by a first-person narrator who is undeniably the writer. It is what the memoirist makes of what happened that matters more than what actually happened. What actually happened — let me repeat this — is only raw material. As V.S. Pritchett said of the genre, "It's all in the art, you get no credit for living."

Some of the greatest memoirs written, if held to the standard of literal ac-

curacy that is required in other kinds of nonfiction writing, would never pass the test. When Thomas De Quincy wrote *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* he led his readers to believe that his addiction was behind him — not true; he was taking opium when he wrote the book, and continued to take it for the next thirty years. To this day, there are readers who cry "Liar!" at one of the most profound descriptions ever given of drug addiction. Edmund Gosse's *Father and Son*, written in 1907 when Gosse was fifty-seven years old, recounts conversations that purportedly took place when he was eight years old. Upon publication, people who had known the Gosses protested that Edmund made those conversations up (which of course he had); but the book was instantly recognized as a masterpiece of autobiography. George Orwell's brilliant short memoir of his school days, *Such, Such Were the Joys*, was also denounced by people who had been Orwell's classmates (filled with "inaccuracies," they insisted), yet no one reading that essay today can feel themselves in the presence of anything but truth: real truth: emotional truth.

James Frey is a fraud. He made up experiences he passed off as actual and as his own. For this scam, memoir is taking the rap.

Vivian Gornick

New York, New York

OUR POVERTY, OURSELVES

Re: Voices: November/December 2005. Once again, both the *Columbia Journalism Review* and its writers conflate race, class, and poverty, while ignoring gender and the powerful role it plays. This remains true despite the fact that 90 percent of the adults receiving Temporary Aid to Needy Families are women caring for small children. This is true despite the fact that the vast majority of the elderly poor are female — impoverished by lack of participation in the paid

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work force or by lack of adequate wages and pension benefits in the jobs they held. This is true despite the fact that teenage parents, whose horizons shrink from lack of education, are almost inevitably female. I look forward to the day when a respected journalist such as David K. Shipler expands his vision of poverty reporting to include gender. Maybe then others will follow.

Rita Henley Jensen
Editor in chief, *Women's eNews*
New York, New York

EDITORS' NOTE: THREE CHEERS

This is CJR's annual Excellence in Journalism issue, in which we urge media outlets to advertise and tell the world about the journalistic awards they have won. So we would be remiss in not trumpeting some triumphs of our own. ■ Our May/June 2005 cover story, "Stations of the Cross: The Rise of Faith-Based News," by Mariah Blake, has won a 2006 Wilbur Award, given for outstanding work in the secular media on religious issues, from the Religion Communicators Council. The article (find it on www.cjr.org) describes how evangelical Christians are creating an alternative news universe and how that affects the rest of us. The piece is also a finalist for the Templeton Story of the Year award from the Religion Newswriters Association, with winners announced in September.

■ On the digital side, meanwhile, *CJR Daily* (www.cjrdaily.org), our energetic sister Web site, is one of three nominees for a Webby award for best blog — political. The ten-year-old Webby awards are presented by the International Academy of Digital Arts & Sciences, with winners announced May 9. ■ CJR's chairman, Victor Navasky, has won the George Polk Book Award for *A Matter of Opinion*, his 2005 memoir of a life in journalism and reflections on the significance of the small magazine of ideas — like *The Nation*, where Navasky was publisher and editorial director for years (he is now publisher emeritus), and like the magazine you hold in your hands.

DISCOUNTING WAL-MART

Many Darts to CJR for the Liza Featherstone commentary on the four Wal-Mart documentaries (CJR, January/February). Featherstone is far from the disinterested party CJR should seek for speaking out for what is right, fair, and decent — as CJR styles its mission.

Yes, CJR did identify her relationship with the Robert Greenwald documentary — Laurel for that — but only at the end of the piece. Subtract the Laurel and add penalty Darts. The title of Featherstone's book (*Selling Women Short: The Landmark Battle for Workers' Rights at Wal-Mart*), also revealed only at the end, suggests she carries ideological baggage beyond what seems to me appropriate for writing an article packaged as dispassionate analysis.

Here is my ideological disclaimer: I am a conservative, probably a zealot, in Featherstone's view. I like Wal-Mart; I sometimes shop there. Wal-Mart is not perfect; size if nothing else precludes perfection. Wal-Mart and its competitors have wrought massive change in our society. But change is what our society is all about.

Curious about emphasis given each film in light of Featherstone's relationship with the Greenwald film, I measured the copy directly pertaining to each film. *Frontline (Is Wal-Mart Good for America?)* got 3.56 inches; Galloway (*Why Wal-Mart Works (And Why That Drives Some People Crazy)*) 8.87 inches; CNBC (*The Age of Wal-Mart*) 8.69 inches; and Greenwald (*Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price*) 16 inches. Coincidence?

Furthermore, Featherstone's question — "Shouldn't we be worried when the nation's largest private employer provides jobs that work well only for people with few needs and low expectations?" — is ridiculous on its face. Clearly a huge majority of Wal-Mart's 1.3 million U.S. jobs work well for people with various needs and expectations. How else could the company function? Store managers, for example, commonly work their way up. In any case, for the two women cited in the Galloway film — one a ninety-year-old retiree, the other a recovered drug addict — so what? For both, opportunities would seem quite limited. Wal-Mart met those needs. For the former drug addict, a career just may appear.

Indeed, given the title of Featherstone's book, had Wal-Mart not hired the two

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women, I suspect she would have been in high dudgeon with charges of oppression and discrimination.

Harold Morgan
Albuquerque, New Mexico

THAT LIBERAL PRESS

Nicholas Lemann's insightful thoughts about balancing political views in J-schools ("On Balance," CJR, January/February) are valid and great fodder for discussion, but miss what I believe is the real core of the problem: the very concept of unfettered discussion is liberal in our culture. Journalists' pervasive view that no one person or group should be imbued with the authority to control access to public information (and ergo thought) is considered heretical and insensiblly liberal to those who want to control it. For twenty years, I have espoused to my students that a primary function of a journalist is to move information from the hands of those who have it to the hands of those who should. It isn't J-schools turning students into liberals. It's our society labeling what J-schools teach as liberal.

John Choldston
Cedar City, Utah

AWARDS

The Pulitzer Prizes

Prizes in Journalism

PUBLIC SERVICE

The Sun Herald, Biloxi, Mississippi and
The Times-Picayune, New Orleans
FINALISTS: *The Blade*, Toledo, Ohio;
The Washington Post

BREAKING NEWS REPORTING

The Times-Picayune staff
FINALISTS: *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* staff;
South Florida Sun-Sentinel staff

INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING

Susan Schmidt, James V. Grimaldi, and R. Jeffrey Smith, *The Washington Post*
FINALISTS: Jason Felch and Ralph Frammolino, *Los Angeles Times*;
Sally Kestin, Megan O'Matz, and John Maines, *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*

EXPLANATORY REPORTING

David Finkel, *The Washington Post*
FINALISTS: Debbie Cenziper, *The Miami Herald*;
Mark Johnson and Kawanza Newson, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

BEAT REPORTING

Dana Priest, *The Washington Post*
FINALISTS: Barry Meier, *The New York Times*;
Jerry Mitchell, *The Clarion-Ledger*, Jackson, Mississippi

NATIONAL REPORTING

James Risen and Eric Lichtblau, *The New York Times* and
The San Diego Union-Tribune and *Copley News Service* staffs
FINALIST: Michael Moss, *The New York Times*

INTERNATIONAL REPORTING

Joseph Kahn and Jim Yardley, *The New York Times*
FINALIST: Steve Fainaru, *The Washington Post*;
Sebastian Rotella, *Los Angeles Times*

FEATURE WRITING

Jim Sheeler, *Rocky Mountain News*, Denver, Colorado
FINALISTS: Dan Barry, *The New York Times*;
Mary Schmich, *Chicago Tribune*

COMMENTARY

Nicholas D. Kristof, *The New York Times*
FINALISTS: Chris Rose, *The Times-Picayune*; Cynthia Tucker, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

CRITICISM

Robin Givhan, *The Washington Post*
FINALISTS: Nicolai Ouroussoff, *The New York Times*;
Jerry Saltz, *The Village Voice*

EDITORIAL WRITING

Rick Attig and Doug Bates, *The Oregonian*, Portland
FINALISTS: Editorial Board, *The Birmingham (Alabama) News*;
B. Marie Harris, Tony Biffle, and Stan Tiner, *The Sun Herald*, Biloxi, Mississippi

EDITORIAL CARTOONING

Mike Luckovich, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*
FINALISTS: Marshall Ramsey, *The Clarion-Ledger*, Jackson, Mississippi;

Mike Thompson, *Detroit Free Press*

BREAKING NEWS PHOTOGRAPHY

The Dallas Morning News staff
FINALISTS: Carolyn Cole and Brian Vander Brug, *Los Angeles Times*;
Eric Gay, The Associated Press

FEATURE PHOTOGRAPHY

Todd Heisler, *Rocky Mountain News*
FINALISTS: Mike Stocker, *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*;
Damon Winter, *Los Angeles Times*

Letters and Drama

FICTION

March by Geraldine Brooks (Viking)
FINALISTS: *The March* by E.L. Doctorow (Random House);
The Bright Forever by Lee Martin (Shaye Areheart Books/Crown Publishing)

DRAMA

no award

FINALISTS: *Miss Witherspoon* by Christopher Durang;
The Intelligent Design of Jenny Chow by Rolin Jones;
Red Light Winter by Adam Rapp

HISTORY

Polio: An American Story by David M. Oshinsky (Oxford University Press)
FINALISTS: *New York Burning* by Jill Lepore (Alfred A. Knopf);
The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln by Sean Wilentz (W.W. Norton)

BIOGRAPHY

American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer by Kai Bird and Martin J. Sherwin (Alfred A. Knopf)
FINALISTS: *The Year of Magical Thinking* by Joan Didion (Alfred A.

Knopf); *The Peabody Sisters: Three Women Who Ignited American Romanticism* by Megan Marshall

(Houghton Mifflin)

POETRY

Late Wife by Claudia Emerson (Louisiana State University Press)
FINALISTS: *American Sublime* by Elizabeth Alexander (Graywolf Press);
Elegy on Toy Piano by Dean Young (University of Pittsburgh Press)

GENERAL NON-FICTION

Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya by Caroline Elkins (Henry Holt)
FINALISTS: *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* by Tony Judt (The Penguin Press);
The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq by George Packer (Farrar, Straus & Giroux)

MUSIC

Piano Concerto: "Chiavi in Mano" by Yehudi Wyner (Associated Music Publishers, Inc.)
FINALISTS: *Neruda Songs* by Peter Lieberson (Associated Music Publishers, Inc.); *Si Ji (Four Seasons)* by Chen Yi (Theodore Presser Company)

The Lukas Prize Project

Co-administered by the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism and the Nieman Foundation at Harvard

WORK-IN-PROGRESS AWARD

Laura Claridge for *Emily Post and the Rise of Practical Feminism* (Random House)

MARK LYNTON HISTORY PRIZE

Megan Marshall for *The Peabody Sisters: Three Women Who Ignited American Romanticism* (Houghton Mifflin)

J. ANTHONY LUKAS BOOK PRIZE

Nate Blakeslee for *Tulia: Race, Cocaine, and Corruption in a Small Texas Town* (Public Affairs)

John B. Oakes Award

DISTINGUISHED ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISM

Harper's Magazine and *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

John Chancellor Award

EXCELLENCE IN JOURNALISM

Jerry Mitchell, investigative reporter for *The Clarion-Ledger* in Jackson, Mississippi

The Dallas Morning News

2006 Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News Photography



Smiley N. Pool



Barbara Davidson



Michael Ainsworth



Michael Ainsworth

Melanie Burford

Barbara Davidson

Tom Fox

Brad Loper

Michael Mulvey

Smiley N. Pool

Irwin Thompson

Belo proudly congratulates *The Dallas Morning News* photography team, including those whose work comprised the award-winning portfolio, for receiving the 2006 Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News Photography. Their courage, perseverance and heroics led to our industry's most compelling visual narrative of Hurricane Katrina and its terrible toll on human life.

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AWARDS

The Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Awards

SILVER BATONS, FOR EXCELLENCE IN BROADCAST JOURNALISM

ABC News for live coverage of the death of Pope John Paul II and the election of Pope Benedict XVI

CNBC for *The Age of Wal-Mart: Inside America's Most Powerful Company*

CNN for coverage of the tsunami disaster in South Asia

Frontline and WGBH (Boston) for *Al Qaeda's New Front* on PBS

Frontline, WGBH (Boston), and *The New York Times* for *The Secret History of the Credit Card* on PBS

HBO for *Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel: The Sport of Sheiks*

North Carolina Public Radio, WUNC (Chapel Hill), for *North Carolina Voices: Understanding Poverty*

PRI, WGBH (Boston), and BBC World Service for *The World: The Global Race for Stem Cell Therapies*

The Kitchen Sisters, Jay Allison, and NPR for *Hidden Kitchens*

The Sundance Channel, Denis Poncet, Jean-Xavier de LeStrade, and Allyson Luchak for *The Staircase*

WFTS-TV (Tampa) for *Crosstown Expressway Investigation*

WJW (Cleveland) for *School Bus Bloat*

WPMI-TV (Mobile) for *For Lauren's Sake*

National Magazine Awards

Sponsored by the American Society of Magazine Editors in association with Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism

These are all finalists, listed in alphabetical order. The winners are to be announced on May 9.

GENERAL EXCELLENCE

(Over 2,000,000 circulation)

Glamour
National Geographic
O, The Oprah Magazine
Prevention
Time

(1,000,000 to 2,000,000)

ESPN The Magazine
Fortune

Martha Stewart Living
The New Yorker
Vogue

(500,000 to 1,000,000)

Esquire
Everyday Food
House & Garden
Marie Claire
Runner's World
Wired

(250,000 to 500,000)

The Atlantic Monthly
Backpacker
New York Magazine
Texas Monthly
Technology Review

(100,000 to 250,000)

Chicago
Foreign Policy
Harper's Magazine
Harvard Business Review
Town & Country Travel

(Under 100,000)

Aperture
The Believer
Legal Affairs
ReadyMade
The Virginia Quarterly Review

PERSONAL SERVICE

Field & Stream
Men's Health
National Geographic
O, The Oprah Magazine
Self

LEISURE INTERESTS

Bicycling
Condé Nast Traveler
Golf Magazine
GQ
Men's Health

REPORTING

The Atlantic Monthly
(two nominations)
Harper's Magazine
The New Yorker
Rolling Stone

PUBLIC INTEREST

The Atlantic Monthly
Legal Affairs
Mother Jones
The New Yorker
Texas Monthly

FEATURE WRITING

The American Scholar
The Atlantic Monthly
GQ
Outside
The Oxford American

PROFILE WRITING

The Atlantic Monthly
Esquire
GQ
Los Angeles Magazine
The New Yorker
Rolling Stone

ESSAYS

Harper's Magazine
(two nominations)
Vanity Fair
The Virginia Quarterly Review (two nominations)

COLUMNS AND COMMENTARY

Field & Stream
Inc.
The New Yorker
Scientific American
Vanity Fair

REVIEWS AND CRITICISM

The Atlantic Monthly
GQ
Harper's Magazine
New York Magazine
The Virginia Quarterly Review

BEST MAGAZINE DEPARTMENTS

Backpacker
Condé Nast Traveler
Entertainment Weekly
Men's Health
New York Magazine

SINGLE-TOPIC ISSUE

National Geographic
The Oxford American
Saveur

Scientific American
Time

DESIGN
Everyday Food
GQ
Kids: Fun Stuff to Do Together
Martha Stewart Living
New York Magazine
Nylon

PHOTOGRAPHY
Departures
Gourmet
New York Magazine
Time
Texas Monthly
W

PHOTO PORTFOLIO / PHOTO ESSAY
Aperture
Field & Stream
National Geographic
Rolling Stone
Vanity Fair
W

FICTION
The Atlantic Monthly
McSweeney's
The Virginia Quarterly Review (two nominations)
Zoetrope: All-Story

GENERAL EXCELLENCE ONLINE
Beliefnet
CNET.com
Men.style.com
National Geographic Online
Newsweek.com

2006 PULITZER PRIZE WINNER

“We are grateful for the recognition, extraordinarily proud of our staffs and resolute in our commitment to serve our readers with distinction. There's no better way to underscore that commitment than by exercising our watchdog role with great journalism.”

David C. Copley, Publisher

Karin E. Winner, Editor



On April 17, the Copley News Service-Washington, D.C., Bureau and Union-Tribune journalists received a Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting on the Randy “Duke” Cunningham story. Another milestone in 138 years of watchdog journalism and commitment to the community. Visit www.pulitzer.uniontrib.com for all related articles.

The San Diego
Union-Tribune.

SUNDAY
JUNE 12, 2005

Lawmaker's home sale questioned

Cunningham defends deal with defense firm's owner

By Marcus Stern
COPLEY NEWS SERVICE

tens of millions of dollars in contracts from the Pentagon.

Mitchell Wade bought the San Diego Republican's house for \$1,675,000 in November 2003 and put it back on the market because

on a tear — reeling in tens of millions of dollars in defense and intelligence-related contracts.

In an interview Wednesday, Copley

Compa
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Honoring the Best
in Television and Radio News
and Public Affairs Programming

ALFRED I.
DUPONT
COLUMBIA
UNIVERSITY
AWARDS



Entries are now being accepted for the annual Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Awards in television and radio journalism. We invite you to submit entries in the following categories:

- ◆ NETWORK TELEVISION AND NATIONALLY DISTRIBUTED CABLE PROGRAMS
- ◆ LOCAL TELEVISION NEWS
- ◆ INDEPENDENT TELEVISION
- ◆ NATIONAL AND LOCAL RADIO

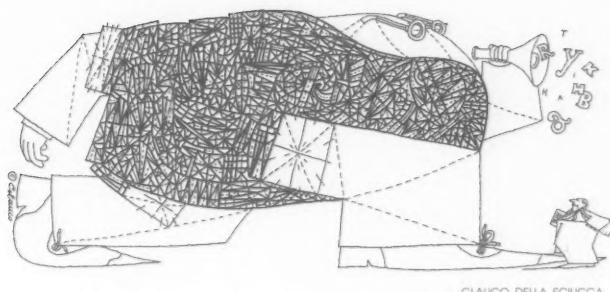
To be eligible, programs must have aired for the first time in the United States between July 1, 2005 and June 30, 2006. Entries running longer than two hours must be postmarked by June 15, 2006.

All others must be postmarked by July 7, 2006.

For information or an entry form, visit our website at www.dupont.org,
email dupontawards@jrn.columbia.edu, or write us at:

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VOICES



BY MIKE HOYT

MY MOTHER'S OBIT

A son reconsiders the hometown paper

A few days before she died in January my mother asked me to write her obit. She had her practical side, and I am the journalist in the family after all. When the time came I wrote it up and gave it to the funeral director, who sent it on to *The Kansas City Star*. The *Star*, in turn, asked the funeral director to ask me for \$500. For my mother's obit. He sounded a little sheepish.

The obit was, I concede, a bit long. Ryan, the young man who recently answered my call at the *Star*, explained that the paper gives away the first nine lines free, but at the tenth line a base rate of \$63.25 kicks in and, after that, another \$31 for every five lines. So I was pretty far up there in the lines department. I thought there were a few bases to cover and I have a lot of brothers and sisters. Still, my mother would have leaped out of her hospital bed had I told her that the bill would approach \$500. She was a child of the Depression who scraped margarine from the foil, so as not to waste any. The funeral director gently suggested that I shorten the thing, and I did. The final bill was \$404, and I paid it.

But I didn't feel good about it.

My mother, I would like to tell *The Kansas City Star*, was a citizen of substance and a faithful reader. Did she not vote? Did she not worry about Kansas City's excessive murder rate? Did she not watch the occasional Royals game,

painful though they often are? Did she not keep her yard nice, cutting the grass into her eighties? Did she not have many friends and neighbors who loved her, and many more who would mark her passing?

And did she not always keep each *Kansas City Star* on her kitchen table for three or four days, until she was sure she had harvested all of its wisdom? Did she not mail me clippings from time to time — a funny column here, a poignant story there?

Did she not have a relationship with you?

As best I can tell, the practice of charging for obituaries took off with the rise of public ownership of newspapers, when the need to boost the stock price demanded ever-rising margins of profit. I would like to meet the newspaper manager who first thought it up. I can almost see him — somehow I know it's a man — sitting bolt upright in bed as the idea arrives. He knows that death is a private event that yearns to be made public. So why not capitalize! Sell the space! The beauty part: everybody dies.

I would like to say to him, What a genius you are, sir! An income stream stretching into infinity!

Or, maybe not into infinity, exactly, given how newspapers are faring. I would have an additional message as well. I would say, Your idea, sir, may mark the precise moment on the timeline when newspapers began a slow drift away from their readers. You forgot what newspapers are for. How about that on your gravestone? ■

Mike Hoyt is executive editor of CJR.

BY BOB KOCHERSBERGER

MY SON'S CRIME

An ex-reporter feels the sting of the story

For most of the 1970s, I was a reporter and editor for *The Evening Press* in Binghamton, New York, and for several of those years I covered the police beat. I wrote crime and arrest stories daily, and some were pretty good.

Following what I had learned in journalism school, I paid relatively little attention to the human side of the unfortunates who were arrested. In a way, they were immaterial, fodder for my impartial stories, unless I could somehow make my story even better by finding some particularly juicy angle. It was always about the story; the story ruled.

Last November, the tables were richly turned on me when my own son was arrested. A reporter from the local newspaper called the house to confirm my employment and ask if I had any comment. My employment? The question momentarily puzzled me. I thought briefly, then declined to comment. The reporter dutifully put that in the story, just as she had been taught.

Of course, there were things I could have said about my troubled child, but what earthly good would be done by baring those painful, private matters? What was paramount for this reporter, as it had been for me years ago, was the story, and she was checking off one more item on her to-do list: get comment from the family. I had no sense she cared how we were feeling; she seemed more interested in ensuring I had her mobile phone number in case I changed my mind.

I had a hard time fetching the newspaper from the front lawn the next day. At least the story was not on the front page, and it was an accurate account of the arrest and allegations facing my son. But I think it included too much by half. I was dismayed to read my name and place of work, but thought, well, maybe that comes from being an occasional op-ed columnist for the newspaper. I was really stunned to read my wife's name and occupation.

For what crime stories are the names and occupations of a twenty-six-year-old defendant's parents relevant? None, I would say, so I suspect the newspaper was succumbing to the lure of "the story" rather than what was really necessary for a full report. A cautionary tale began to emerge. See? Even the kids of upstanding parents can get in trouble with the law. Certainly my being a university professor caught the reporter's

eye. But the icing on this tasty story, apparently, was that my wife is an Episcopal priest.

My colleagues at work were supportive, and some wanted to write scalding letters to the editor. I discouraged them, appreciating the sentiment but fearing the results. Rather than write a letter, I took the matter up with the newspaper's reader advocate.

I found the exchange unsatisfying, as his investigation in the newsroom came up with "prominence" and "full disclosure" as the reasons I was named; my wife, he said, was added to the story because of an "impulse to identify both parents,"

The icing on this tasty story, apparently, was that my wife is an Episcopal priest.

although I suppose her profession had its "prominence," too. I would have thought the *suspect's* prominence — not that of his parents — was operative. The irony that I gained my alleged prominence by writing for that very newspaper has not escaped me.

All of this, of course, has given me deep pause in my teaching career. As I teach basic news writing, how will I frame "prominence" as a major part of news value?

A journalist caught up in the news has little refuge. My first instinct was to defend my privacy, but what, then, of the things I have told my students over the last twenty-five years? I could straighten my shoulders and say, well, of course the paper had to report all of this; it was news. But to deny the pain caused by the story is equally impossible.

The reporter has gone on with her job, writing dozens of police and crime stories since November. And why not? When you cover the police and your goal is a great story, your time for reflection lasts only until the next squawk from the scanner.

Those unfortunate people who get caught up in the news, though, as I was, cannot leap to the next story, and their unintended newsworthiness can last a long time. From now on I'll try to teach my students to think hard about what constitutes news, and to recognize that showing kindness to the subjects of their stories will do their work no harm. ■

Bob Kochersberger (bobkochs@gmail.com) teaches journalism at North Carolina State University.

“OREGON’S FORGOTTEN HOSPITAL”

FIFTEEN STORIES

THAT MADE US REMEMBER.

Is it still possible for an old-fashioned editorial crusade to change minds, laws and lives?

In Oregon, the answer is a resounding "Yes."

The Pulitzer Board awarded the 2006 Pulitzer prize for editorial writing to Rick Atting and Doug Bates for their "persuasive, richly reported editorials on abuses inside the Oregon State Hospital."

The series of 15 stories exposed the shameful truth about Oregon's neglected, overcrowded state mental hospital in Salem. The hospital had changed little since "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" was filmed there in 1975.



The response to The Oregonian's editorial pressure was dramatic.

- Administrators hastily removed adolescents from where they had been housed on the hospital premises and placed them in better facilities.
- Legislators passed a bill creating hundreds of new community mental health beds.
- Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski, who bristled in public at the editorials' call for him to take a look at the hospital he had never visited, quietly did so.
- After a decade of delay, legislators also enacted a mental-health insurance parity bill by a remarkable majority.
- Finally, the Legislature agreed to replace the ramshackle 122-year-old disgrace with a modern mental hospital.

Through their work, Attig and Bates changed the lives of Oregon's least-powerful citizens. We're proud of them and their work, and gratified that the Pulitzer Board recognized it.



Award-winning Oregonian editors, Doug Bates and Rick Attig.

Read the award-winning series at
www.oregonlive.com/special/oregonian/hospital

The Oregonian

DARTS & LAURELS



DART to PBS's *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, for pitching too many soft-balls to the White House heavy hitter. On February 8, Lehrer conducted a thirty-minute interview with Vice President Dick Cheney that was notable for the subjects that never popped up. Among the more strikingly absent, perhaps — in an interview that came only four days after both *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* reported that Cheney's former chief of staff, I. Lewis Libby, told investigators he had learned of Valerie Plame's identity as a CIA officer directly from his boss — was any question from the newsman about that scandalous leak. Responding to the chorus of boos from *NewsHour* fans about the various bases left untouched, the network's ombudsman, Michael Getler, judiciously weighed in. "There is, indeed," the umpire conceded, "a long list of questions about Cheney's views and role that journalists need to explore, in detail and depth, before the historians." Maybe next year?

LAUREL to Laurel Leff, associate professor of journalism at Northeastern University, for unearthing one of the profession's darkest little secrets. In 1939, the eminent Harvard scholar Carl Friedrich requested permission to speak for ten minutes to the American Newspaper Publishers Association about the urgent need for leaders in the business to open their doors, much as those in such other professions as the law and the sciences were opening theirs, to European colleagues desperately seeking refuge from Nazi persecution. The ANPA said no. So too did the deans of America's journalism schools — mostly with sounds of silence — to pleas from within the academy. Now, thanks to Leff, this ignominious record has been

brought to light in all its ugly implications. Naming names and quoting quotes, the former *Wall Street Journal* reporter has documented, in a yet-unpublished paper, the callousness, self-interest, and blatant anti-Semitism that kept the press's doors barred against the foreign intruders. This spring, responding to an appeal by more than eighty well-known journalists for a public acknowledgement of that terrible failure some sixty years ago, the Newspaper Association of America, née the ANPA, invited Leff to report on her findings to its fifty-member board at its convention in Chicago. An encouraging sign of human progress, to be sure — though of little comfort to the ghosts who filled the room.

DART to WSB-TV, the ABC affiliate in Atlanta, for discretion without valor. The recent trial of former mayor Bill Campbell on federal corruption charges raised embarrassingly belated questions about news practices at WSB-TV when a key witness named Marion Brooks described the first-class trips and high-end gifts she got from the big-spending mayor during their four-year affair in the 1990s. During some of that time, Brooks was a reporter and anchor for WSB, where, according to accounts in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, the relationship was common knowledge in the newsroom — though not deemed appropriate, evidently, for public airing.

DART to CBS, for yet another wardrobe malfunction. In a dramatic hour-long report about a random, brutal murder in Columbia, Missouri, for which a young man named Ryan Fergu-

son is serving a forty-year prison sentence as a participant in the crime, the network's prime-time news show *48 Hours* incorporated numerous graphics from the local paper, the *Columbia Daily Tribune*, to mark the course of its narrative. (As chance would have it, the victim was a *Tribune* editor, killed in the paper's parking lot during a robbery.) So when the storyline got to the sentencing stage — by which time the program had raised serious doubts about the justice of Ferguson's conviction — it was no surprise to see a graphic of the *Tribune* front page on the TV screen, this one showing, under the headline FERGUSON GETS 40 YEARS, a photo of the accused man. What was a surprise was his outfit. Although the paper's original photo had captured the defendant awaiting sentence garbed in the garish orange jumpsuit of a prison inmate, in the program's purported reproduction of the page he had been transformed — a respectable citizen conventionally dressed in light shirt, quiet tie, and tan jacket. Blaming the switch on an unnamed freelance editor who didn't know any better, *48 Hours* eventually issued a pro forma apology on its program and its Web site. Sans images or context, however, the statement did nothing to enlighten viewers as to why the alteration was considered so outré in the world of ethical fashion.

DART to *Variety*, for misplaced modesty. In a full-throated review of the Hollywood remake of the 1977 comedy *Fun With Dick and Jane*, the show biz bible offered a variety of details on the movie's plot, cast, writing, and direction but didn't bother to mention that one of the producers of both versions was Peter Bart, *Variety*'s editor in chief. (In sum: IMPART BART'S PART IN ART, SEZ DART.)

Darts & Laurels is written by Gloria Cooper, CJR's deputy executive editor, to whom nominations should be addressed: 212-854-1887; gc15@columbia.edu.

STATE OF THE ART

THE POOREST FOR THE TREES

Last fall, the press was glowing from the accolades its post-Katrina news coverage had earned, but the editors of *Grist*, the online environmental magazine, were dissatisfied. They had seen plenty of admirable reporting on the suffering of the poor along the Gulf Coast, and they were glad the environmental roots of the disaster were getting attention. But why, they wondered, were two of the biggest issues raised by the storm — poverty and environmental degradation — being covered as unrelated problems? To them, the hurricane proved the rule: that low-income communities bear a disproportionate burden of the effects of environmental damage. From the power plants and trash heaps of the South Bronx to the noxious industrial chicken and hog farms of the Carolinas, America's poor are far more likely to live in areas affected by pollution than are the affluent. The poor are also more likely to be exposed to toxins in the workplace, to suffer from asthma and other diseases tied to pollution and, when they complain, to be ignored by local government and businesses.

Chip Giller, *Grist*'s founder and president, worries that even when reporters take on stories about poverty, they rarely tease out these connections to the environment. He also thinks that too much environmental reporting is confined to big-picture topics like global warming and species extinction — important concerns, but unrelated to readers' daily lives. Part of the problem is that pollution and toxic working conditions are just harder topics to pitch. As Giller points out, "These stories aren't breaking — they tend to ooze." But the lack of interest, he says, is also because "the environment" has come to mean nature or wilderness rather than people's immediate surroundings. "We hope that when people think of environmental reporting, what comes to mind wouldn't simply be salmon protection or fights about national parks," says Giller. "We're asking that journalism begin to connect environmentalism back to communities in which people live."

The attention generated by Katrina spurred the staff at *Grist* to undertake an ambitious project in hopes of addressing such questions and, ultimately, expanding the very definition of green journalism. For seven weeks, starting in February, the site published "Poverty & the Environment," a series focusing on the overlooked link between class and environmental dam-

age. Along with stories and interviews, it includes a variety of sidebar features, such as statistics on how the cost of living encourages unhealthy lifestyles, photos of West Virginians affected by mountaintop-removal mining, and historical essays that explore such things as how the movement first got its elitist overtones (it was Teddy Roosevelt's fault). An audio slide show,

narrated by a woman from Columbia, Mississippi, takes readers on a "virtual walking tour" through her low-income African American community, polluted by a chemical plant that once manufactured Agent Orange.

Giller launched *Grist* (www.grist.org) in 1999 as an e-mail newsletter to a few hundred friends and colleagues, but his sense of humor and his pop-culture sensibility quickly caught on with readers, especially young

ones, who were burned out on the dour advocacy of much environmental writing. Despite its growth since then, the site has managed to maintain that irreverence while remaining seriously committed to the environment, a combination that Giller believes has helped *Grist* appeal to a new generation of environmentalists, one that probably doesn't read *Sierra Magazine* or the Greenpeace newsletter. In large part, *Grist* continues to define itself against the rest of the green press, and is rewarded by a loyal audience — more than a half-million unique visitors a month.

While *Grist* hopes the series will inform and energize its readership, "Poverty & the Environment" is also aimed at the same media outlets the staff believes routinely underplay the importance of that ampersand. The ambition is not without precedent. In January 2005, *Grist* launched a smaller series based on an influential essay entitled "The Death of Environmentalism," by Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus, which argued that the movement must develop new strategies to remain effective in the twenty-first century. When the *New York Times* reporter Felicity Barringer saw *Grist*'s coverage of the essay, she gave it 1,500 words and national attention in her paper. It remains to be seen whether "Poverty & the Environment" will garner similar interest in the connection between green streets and greenbacks, but Giller sees hope in the realities of the newsroom. "You can only write so many stories about the rainforest," he said. "To be able to use real people, it just makes storytelling easier."

— Kevin Fried



OP-ART: Children in Houston documented their environment for *Grist*.

CURRENTS

RENAISSANCE MAG

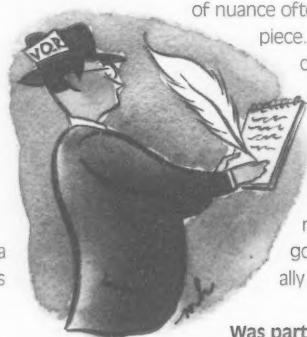
When Ted Genoways became the editor of *The Virginia Quarterly Review* in June 2003, the nationally recognized poet brought big changes to the eighty-one-year-old magazine, which has published such luminaries as H.L. Mencken and Robert Frost. While continuing to publish the poetry and fiction that are its hallmark, Genoways redesigned *VQR*'s somewhat stodgy format and placed an emphasis on deep, long-form reporting — always executed with a literary flair — on topics of lasting import, from the AIDS epidemic in Africa to the teaching of intelligent design. The changes have paid dividends. In mid-March, the magazine was nominated for six National Magazine Awards in four categories, second only to *The Atlantic Monthly*. CJR's Dan Miner spoke with Genoways in March.

When you were hired, what vision did you have for the magazine?

It's really two parts. I wanted simultaneously to honor the mission and tradition of the journal, which had always been to wed the literary and the current-events sides of our identity, but also to see how much we could push the essays in the direction of not only being well wrought, but topical — to give them some urgency and some immediacy. The vision was to take something that seems as archaic as a quarterly publication and try to make it relevant in a media environment where the news cycle is twenty-four hours.

How does your background as a poet influence the way *VQR* approaches reported stories?

I think of Whitman's stance of saying, in *Song of Myself*, "I was there." Having people there who are actually witnessing and reporting on the situation, not having it in some way filtered by another news agency or through government reports, but to actually have someone on the ground who is a talented writer and a sensitive thinker — I think that has been tremendously valuable.



You're drawing a parallel between journalists and poets in terms of how important the tactile experience is.

Absolutely. With daily newspaper, Internet, and TV reporting, everything is so condensed. The emphasis is so much on the deadline that a lot of nuance often isn't able to enter into the piece. By giving our writers a longer deadline, more space, and, when we can, sending them to these places so they can gather details and experience the feel of the place for themselves, I think it adds something that creates not just a literary sense of what's going on, but something that actually contributes to the discussion.

Was part of your mission to make *VQR* more accessible?

It's always been my feeling that serious work does not have to take itself seriously. And, to me, that's the tone that we're always looking for — work that is serious about its subject but isn't self-important, not inaccessible, or imposing, but work that really has some passion and enthusiasm to it. I want to earn your attention through the energy of the prose, the quality of the insights, and then we can support that with the design to really reflect the vibrancy of the work itself.

LANGUAGE CORNER

STARTING WELL

A question from Robyn Packard, based in Toronto as marketing editor for the international business law firm Torys LLP:

"How do you feel about using 'As well' at the beginning of a sentence?"

Not well. That phrase, in that place, doesn't violate any rule of grammar or usage. But it's unnatural and seems terribly affected — pinky-in-the-air stuff, or some writing teacher's half-baked idea of originality. Much the same could be said of "too" at the start of a sentence,

where it crops up occasionally.

With perfectly idiomatic words and phrases like "in addition," "besides," "furthermore," "moreover," "also," and good old reliable "and" available to us, we don't need to hold up a sign to let everybody know we're cute.

— Evan Jenkins

A lot more about writing is in Language Corner at CJR's Web site, www.cjr.org, under "Journalism Tools."

HARD NUMBERS

\$929,000: Estimated cost of an eight-page *New York Times* ad from the government of Sudan, touting the country's "peaceful, prosperous, and democratic future."

45: Minimum number of op-eds in which the *Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof has denounced the genocide in Sudan carried out by government-sponsored militias.

\$1.62 billion: Amount the Bush administration spent on p.r. contracts between October 2002 and March 2005.

68: Percent of that amount spent by the Pentagon.

1: Yemeni editor who faces the death penalty for publishing cartoons that depict the prophet Muhammad.

2: U.S. bookstore chains that refused to carry a magazine that published the cartoons.

1.4: Average percentage circulation decrease among the top three newsmagazines (*Newsweek*, *Time*, *U.S. News & World Report*) last year.

40: Percentage by which *The Week*, which aggregates content, saw its circulation rise.

8: Number of government agencies that allow almost any of their employees to stamp a document "sensitive but unclassified," which can shield it from release under the FOIA.

28: Minimum number of policies that federal agencies have for protecting sensitive but unclassified information, none of which include provisions for monitoring the process.

Sources: NY Daily News, GAO, Bloomberg, SF Chronicle, Project for Excellence in Journalism, National Security Archive, CJR research

FIRST PERSON

MY MURDER MAP

For a former New York police reporter, a grim landmark lurks around every corner

BY WENDELL JAMIESON

Those of us who have lived in the same place our entire lives have maps in our heads: the grade school map, the high school map, the first job map. The little dots are layered one on top of the other as if on clear plastic, each new phase superimposed over the last one. I have always lived in New York City, and I have all those maps, but I have another one, too: my murder map.

I was a police reporter at a newspaper called *New York Newsday*, which closed on July 16, 1995. This was among the most violent periods in the city's history. In 1992, 1,995 people were killed in New York; last year, by comparison, the number was 540 — still a busy time for the police and the police reporters, the assistant district attorneys and coroners, of course, and still horrible for the families, but nothing like a decade ago.

I worked in a tiny office at 1 Police Plaza and wrote about roughly six hundred homicides. I covered some big stories — the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, the firebombing of a downtown Number 4 train — but the vast majority of killings I described merited only a few paragraphs, the details given by the police over the telephone.

But some crimes fell in the middle, and they linger in my mind. This is because my daily travels take me by the places

where they occurred — a drycleaner, a diner, a building in Chinatown, a quiet block in the West Village.

We know that police reporters don't see a lot of gory stuff, that they get there after everything is cleaned up or at least roped off with yellow tape; I usually did.

But not always.

The Park Plaza Diner

To get to my apartment in Brooklyn by car, you take the first exit off the Brooklyn Bridge onto Cadman Plaza South or onto Henry Street. The first route passes the Park Plaza Diner, deep with booths and mirrors and always lit up. As I go by, I often think of Anthony Palumbo and Kathleen D'Angelo.

They were engaged when I got to know them.

He was a clerk at the city Board of Elections; she was an aerobics instructor on Long Island. He had recently been promoted, and thought it augured great things, so in August he took her out for a big night to celebrate — a rented limousine; dinner, and champagne; a stop at city hall, the engine idling, so he could show her where he planned one day to work.

But a hint of desperation colored this relationship. He was forty-four, she was forty. Friends would later say that he was abusive, and that they doubted the wedding would ever take place.

When the limousine pulled up outside the diner



On the morning of April 7, 1994, EMS workers removed the body of Sarah Auerbach from Best French Cleaners in Brooklyn Heights.

at 4 a.m., the two seemed to be dozing in the back-seat. The chauffeur went to wake them; Palumbo came groggily to life, but neither the driver nor Palumbo could wake D'Angelo. Someone called the police. Soon radio cars with flashing lights crowded Cadman Plaza South and detectives were interviewing the Board of Elections clerk. Kathleen D'Angelo was dead.

Palumbo was held for twelve hours at the 84th Precinct stationhouse near an entrance ramp to the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway. Then they let him go. For a week, the story simmered.

Then the *Daily News* reported that the medical examiner had ruled the death a homicide — not a criminal charge, but a medical determination that

Blood was everywhere.
The backs of their heads
were gone, just yawning
crevices, purple-black.

another person had caused D'Angelo's death (she had been strangled). I responded to the scoop by using a reporting trick known only to veteran journalists: I opened the phone book. Anthony Palumbo was listed in Queens. I called the number. He answered.

"I had nothing to do with it," he said. He started sobbing. He went on and on. "This woman was my life. This woman was the best woman you would ever want to meet. This is driving me crazy. We opened the back door. She wasn't breathing. We gave her resuscitation. We tried to put air in her mouth. We tried to wake her up."

Then he had to go, someone was at the door. Detectives.

Anthony Palumbo pleaded guilty to murder in the second degree on January 17, 1997, and was sentenced to fifteen years to life in prison.

Best French Cleaners

When I go down Henry Street in Brooklyn Heights, I pass the Best Cleaners. This used to be Best French Cleaners, and as I pass I think of the warm spring day in 1994 that I spent here standing behind a police line, the day that Rick Varela shot and killed Sarah Auerbach.

She was a vice president at Salomon Brothers' World Trade Center financial division; he was a management consultant for Ernst & Young. Another obsessive relationship — they'd gone out for seven months, even taken a trip together to Europe, but she'd broken it off the year before.

Varela couldn't accept it. He called Auerbach constantly, he showed up outside her apartment. Then, as she was dropping off two silk blouses at the tiny cleaners, he came in wearing a lady's wig and, with a black Walther semiautomatic handgun, shot her in the ear, chin, neck, chest, hip, and back.

Varela went right back out the door, walking a few blocks to his rental car. He drove it to an Avis outlet in Manhattan and paid with his corporate credit card, then returned to his eleventh-floor apartment on West Fifty-first Street. With the pistol in his pocket, he took the subway to Greenwich Village. He watched *The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl*, he had drinks at a Greenwich Village bar, he called his daughter and ex-wife in Illinois. Then he went back to Brooklyn Heights.

There on the promenade with its spectacular views of downtown Manhattan, the glass facades across the river about to glow with the coming day, he shot himself in the head. His body was discovered just feet from the spot where I used to take my three-year-old son to watch the trucks pounding by on the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway.

The Shiny Shoes

In a tiny storefront social club at 57 Rapelye Street in Red Hook, Brooklyn, on a frozen November night in 1992, five people were shot, two fatally: Salvatore Sparacino, a longshoreman, who died at Long Island College Hospital, and John Marella, the club's cook, who was declared dead at the scene. Sparacino's son, John, was critically wounded but lived.

I stood behind the police tape in the chill with the other reporters. As detectives and police photographers came and went, an officer left the door of the club open for a moment, and we got a glimpse of Marella's feet spread apart in heavy black shoes pointed at the ceiling. Here was murder at its most cinematic: the bloodiness and gore and bullet wounds were hidden by the door, we saw only enough to know that a man lay there who was very dead.

The plot unfolded backward. Days before, an armed gang had robbed \$100,000 from the Sealand shipping terminal in Newark. Investigators looked at a variety of motives for the Red Hook shooting, including a link to the Sealand terminal robbery or a neighborhood dispute.

Someone was very angry and stayed that way. John Sparacino was stabbed on New Year's Eve 1992, but again survived. He was shot a second time — hit on the forearm — on May 11, 1994, while standing on the corner of Columbia and Rapelye Streets, a few doors down from the club. Finally, that August, his body was found in



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a burning car in Staten Island with a bullet in the head.

It was a real mess, and no arrests were ever made. But what I remember most were those black shoes, toes pointing straight up, so bright that they must have been shined with care earlier that day, as though the cook had planned to attend a christening or a wedding — or a funeral.

The Mayor of Horatio Street

Blocks have mayors. For forty years, until 1992, the mayor of Horatio Street in the West Village was a woman who lived alone named Lucille Chasin. I had dinner nearby not too long ago and thought of her.

This is a beautiful street: cobblestones, brick row houses, the Hudson River a silver square just down the block. Chasin was a fixture, planting trees, watching children, gossiping. "If you wanted the world to know something, you could telephone, telegraph, or tell Lucille," one woman told me. Chasin was always out and around, she had strong opinions, she attracted attention to herself, and that's what got her killed.

The rain came down in cataracts the night Chasin had her throat slashed in her apartment. The man suspected of the crime, Gary Treahy, wanted money and had decided to rob the first person who popped into his mind, the woman he saw every day, the one with strong opinions. But he died of natural causes before he was charged — the police closed the case as something called "exceptional clearance." No trial. No verdict. No sentence.

Relationships with neighbors are funny things. They aren't your relatives or friends, but you share a common destiny, as if your block is a ship and everyone on it a passenger. When they are murdered, who remembers them?

The night I thought of Lucille Chasin I wondered if anyone who lives on Horatio Street today knew her, or if all that gossip, all that talking, and all those opinions had simply washed away in the rain.

Forever Peace Travel Agency

My wife likes the rice cakes at the Excellent Dumpling House on Lafayette Street, and so we sometimes make the quick trip into Chinatown. In the glare of the fluorescent lights I appear to be engaged, talking, taking it all in, but at least once a visit my thoughts are down the block, on the third floor of a nondescript office building at 227 Canal Street, in what used to be the Wing On Travel Agency.

On a June night in 1994, John Miller, then the deputy commissioner for public information,

called down to the pressroom at 1 Police Plaza and said that two people had been killed in Chinatown. Did anyone want to take a ride? In minutes we were racing through Chatham Square against the traffic, going lights and sirens, as the police like to say.

Radio cars crowded Canal Street, parked at odd angles. The deputy commissioner told me to put my press identification tag away. As we climbed the stairs, a burly captain in a white shirt passed us and said, "This is an interesting one, commissioner. Go have a look."

The third floor: uniforms and suits crowded around, kneeling men with doctors' bags brushed white dust onto the door handles and the locks. Miller told me not to touch anything. We pushed our way into the travel agency — the name translates as "Forever Peace" — and then we saw them lying there, Bobby Chan and Lai Wah Chan.

Blood was everywhere, an unbelievable amount of blood. The backs of their heads were gone, just yawning crevices, purple-black. They had been gagged so tightly that the skin on their faces was stretched thin and their lips were pulled back, like in those old photographs of test pilots experiencing g forces. Their neck muscles were taut. Their faces screamed unspeakable fear.

The woman's skirt was hitched up. A detective next to me was saying that whoever did this probably tied them up, then did stuff to her while Bobby Chan, her fiance, watched. Then they were both shot.

I was barely listening. Up through my stomach and chest and into my throat came the almost overpowering sensation that I was going to throw up; it took every cell in my body to keep it down. That's all I could concentrate on until we went back down the stairs. I held the railing the whole way.

No half-opened door to hide the dead body. No silver square of Hudson River at the foot of the block. No glittering Manhattan skyscrapers at dawn. Just an unbelievable amount of blood.

On Canal Street I asked Miller if he had any idea what had happened up there. "Who the hell knows; it's Chinatown" — he'd probably been waiting his whole life to say that. (But in fact, no one was ever arrested.)

He offered me a ride but I said I'd rather walk. The streets were crowded, orange with sunset and warm with the coming summer. I went back to my computer and wrote my story.

It was cut to four paragraphs and played on page twenty-six. ■

Wendell Jamieson is city editor of The New York Times.

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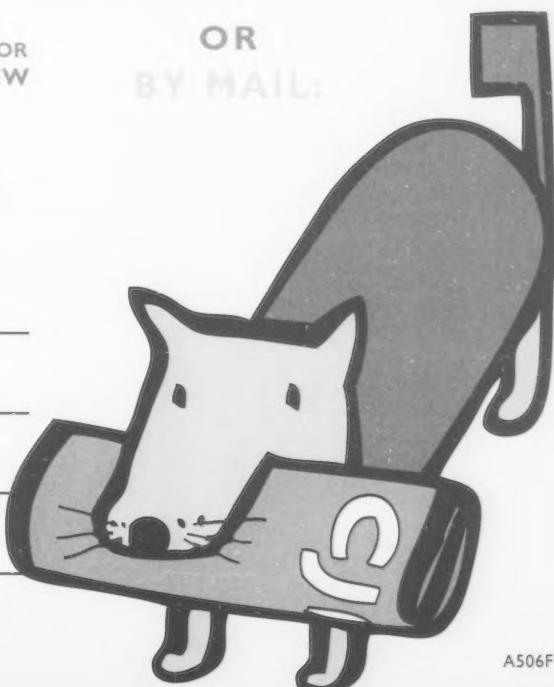
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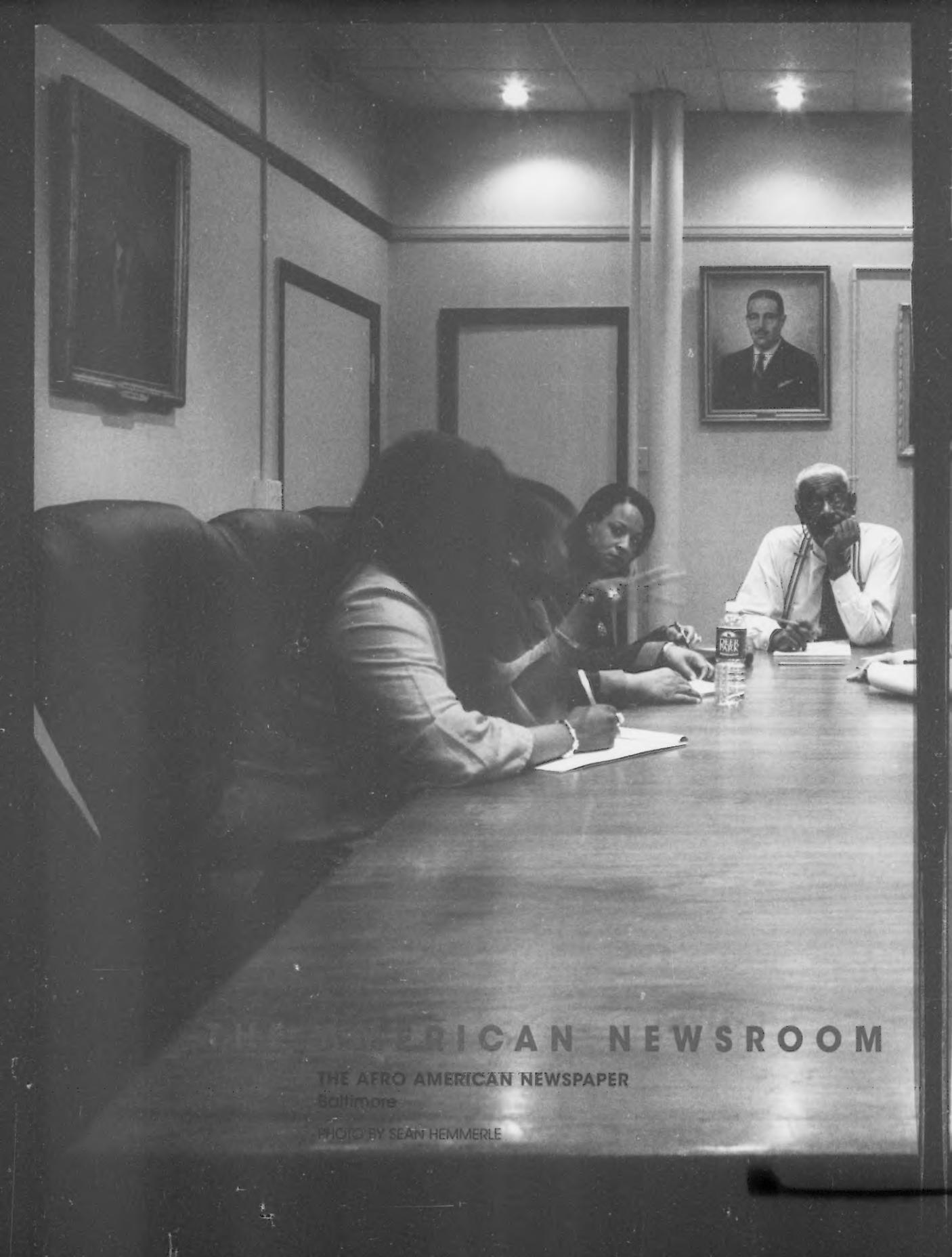
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AMERICAN NEWSROOM

THE AFRO AMERICAN NEWSPAPER
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PHOTO BY SEAN HEMMERLE



The author set out to teach inmates to be reporters, and ended up with a new appreciation for what it means to miss a deadline

OUT OF TIME

BY BRUCE PORTER



The Catskills were just breaking into color last September when I drove up to the New York State Correction Facility at Woodbourne, a medium-security prison sitting on a hillside overlooking the village. It was built of red brick by the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s, and from a distance resembles a Catholic monastery, albeit one surrounded by a chain-link fence and razor wire. The inmates are mostly long-terms, many having spent their prior years in a maximum-security place like Attica or Dannemora, and were transferred to Woodbourne to get ready for their first parole hearing, although winning early parole from Governor George Pataki's administration is a dim hope at best. These days even model prisoners can end up serving their entire sentences before being released. Woodbourne is considered pretty mellow

compared to where they'd been — the correction officers are less abrasive, the prisoners older, not so quick to anger. And there's little violence, owing partly to the fact that a third of the population is on antipsychotic medication.

I'd been invited to teach a semester-long course in journalism by the Bard College Prison Initiative. Started in 2001 with support from the Episcopal Social Services, the Bard program offers liberal arts courses — philosophy, English, history — that a select group of prisoners can take toward earning a bachelor's degree. The chance for a higher education was another thing Pataki did away with when he barred inmates back in 1995 from applying for government school loans to pay for it. The Bard program is free, and it exists because of enthusiastic support from the wardens, who know that prisoners taking college courses are the least

likely to get into trouble, and the least likely to return to prison once they get out.

Before being escorted through to the cell area, visiting professors must sign a paper saying they have been advised of the rules — don't give out your address, don't accept phone calls from inmates — and that they have viewed a twenty-minute cautionary video consisting of skits acted out by corrections personnel. It's a solemn production, suggesting that, were it not for the video, we all might be thinking it perfectly okay to smuggle cocaine into the prison and engage in sex acts with inmates.

Unlike modern prisons, where the cellblocks radiate off a central control pod, Woodbourne was built with a maze of staircases and underground tunnels, with low archways and steam pipes you have to watch out for lest you crack your head. The classrooms sit along a basement corridor with the hall-side walls made of glass so passing corrections officers can see what's going on inside. When I arrived, at 1 p.m. on a Thursday, the guys were all there, fifteen of them, sitting at tables formed in a C shape, most in their mid-thirties, all black or Hispanic, and they were all smiling. The Bard classes were clearly the high point of their week.

They started by asking what I wanted to be called — Mr. Porter? Professor P? I settled for the latter, and we got down to the object of the course, which would be to make them into ace newspaper reporters. It wasn't that they were likely to land a newspaper job. Eleven of the fifteen were in for homicide, after all, not an easy sell to the personnel department, never mind that by the time they got out they would be a little old to start off as cub reporters. On the other hand, learning to distinguish between facts and hearsay, and learning how to write clearly and to describe accurately and quickly the things they observed, would be assets in any endeavor, even in a prison setting, where a lot of things go down and where it's important, sometimes vital, to get the facts straight.

We started off examining the U.S. Constitution and how this document was what afforded them the freedom to write anything they wanted to. "In prison?" one asked. Well, probably not in prison, I allowed. But regardless, they had a surprisingly thorough knowledge of the First Amendment, and also of Jefferson's battles with the Federalists, something Columbia journalism students are pretty hazy on. Bard professors had done a good job with history.

Okay, next let's talk about facts, I said. What's a fact? "Something somebody tells you that happened," said a guy named Carlos, who you could see by his white jacket had come from kitchen duty. Oh, really? I said. If the police tell you they shot a guy because he had a gun, does that make it so? That got a quick no. "It's something you read somewhere," suggested another. Oh, really? I said.

You believe everything you read in the newspapers? No, again. Finally, we got down to it: A fact in a news story was something the reporter could prove existed. But prove how? You have to witness it yourself? they asked. That's one way, I said, whereupon they looked at each other and nodded in self-approval. We were off and running.

For the next several weeks we practiced writing news stories. I'd acquired fifteen Olivetti portables

It wasn't that they were likely to land a newspaper job. Eleven of the fifteen were in for homicide, not an easy sell to the personnel department.

from eBay for about twenty dollars each, and we set them up around the tables. It took a few minutes for the guys to get the hang of them — set the margins, do the tabs. But pretty soon the room was clattering with action, all of them pounding like demons, as if deadline were a minute away. One of them, Manny, with aquiline features and a close-shaven head who turned out to be the class clown, kept ripping sheets of paper out of the roller and balling them up, throwing them over his shoulder and littering the floor. "Hey, Professor P, that's the way they do it, right? Just like in a real newsroom!"

The place erupted in laughter; a corrections officer passed by the window and shot us an odd look. As I would learn, prisoners can laugh louder and longer and get more of a kick out of things than any group I know. The loudest laugh was a fifty-one-year-old black prisoner with a braided ponytail and the nickname "Whisper," for his breathy way of talking, who has spent twenty-eight years of his adult life behind bars. He got to laughing so hard at a story about me being a bumbling white reporter trying to cover the 1964 Harlem race riot that tears were rolling down his cheeks. Their craving for funny stories made me think of the Preston Sturges movie on the Great Depression, *Sullivan's Travels*, where a film director posing as a tramp learns that hard-luck people — hoboes, prison inmates — don't want movies with a social message; they want to be made to laugh.

The guys also liked being jerked around by the professor. I'd pretend to send them out to accident scenes. It was raining, blowing hard, I told them. A tree had fallen on the top of a car, two teenagers sent to the hospital. I'm the traffic cop, how would they get the story? "So what happened?" they asked

the cop. "An idiot could see what happened," he barked at them. "The tree fell over on the car." Lots of laughter. "Were the injuries serious?" they asked. "What do I look like, a doctor?" More laughter. They called the hospital, asked about the victims' condition. "I'm just the operator, how on earth would I know?" This laid them out.

Find out who you're talking to, for God's sakes, and ask precise questions, I told them. And be aggressive. Jefferson wanted the press to challenge authority. "Hey, Professor P, you're asking us to be aggressive?" said Julian, with tied-up dreads, doing fifteen to life. "They told us that's our problem." They all laughed again.

Soon they got more proficient at nailing down the details. And, whether or not it grew out of their prison experience, they all demonstrated a healthy skepticism when it came to buying what people said. One news story involved a man found lying in his car with stab wounds, who'd told the police

I felt exceedingly sad thinking that these guys had finally found a real vocation, one that they could be pretty good at. But it was too late for them.

he'd picked up a female hitchhiker who'd tried to rob him and then knifed him after she discovered he had only two dollars. Writing that story, Columbia students tend to put down whatever the guy said as fact. At Woodbourne, there was major doubt as to whether he was telling the truth. Maybe he'd done something to get stabbed for, maybe the guy tried to assault her, suggested Anthony, a sharp Hispanic prisoner doing ten to twenty years for manslaughter, who was learning the carpenter's trade for when he got out.

Six or seven weeks into the course, snow now thick in the hills, they'd really begun to get the hang of it, to the extent that probably half of them could walk into a small paper and do the job as well as anyone, maybe better with a little practice. Dwelling on their newfound capacity invariably made for a sad drive home, as I imagined how things might have turned out differently for them. I didn't know much about their murder charges, other than what was on the corrections department Web site — that in each case it had been in the second degree, the unpremeditated variety. So probably it was an impulsive act, maybe committed in the face of provocation, and they'd been nineteen or twenty at the time. Yes, I told myself,

the other person had died. Nonetheless, I still felt exceedingly sad thinking that here these guys had finally found a real vocation, one they liked and that they could be pretty good at. But it was too late for them.

For the second half of the term I wanted to have them report on their lives in prison. But how? Inmates tend to rank up there with police officers and public school teachers when it comes to complaining, and I didn't want a lot of griping about overcooked food or administrative screw-ups. Thanks to a novelist friend, Emily Prager, I got the idea: Have them interview their pals on what they liked about prison. This, of course, fairly threw them. But, Professor P, we hate prison, why can't we write about that? Because everybody knows that story, I said. You're news reporters, and the news is, you know, new.

Reluctantly, over the next week they hit up fellow inmates in this regard, with trepidation in some cases, because they knew these guys weren't going to like the question either. Here's one of the leads. "Animal stands out among most inmates. His 6-foot-9-inch, 250-pound muscled frame was the result of years spent lifting weights. He has an array of ghoulish tattoos and a gnarled razor scar that runs down the right side of his cheek. I could not help but feel a bit uneasy as I approached the front of his cube, where he sat preparing a peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich." Nice touch, that sandwich, I told the writer.

In the end they persuaded just about everyone to talk. One inmate, Jose I'll call him, told one of my reporters that he liked Woodbourne not for any program, but for how it had turned out to be a "gangster's paradise." "For Jose," the story said, "prison is like a jail shopping network, where profiling, signifying, and slick talking purchase the company of hustlers, thugs, and killers. Caring very little about the overall expense of perhaps coming back to prison or being killed, he associates affluence and success with such a crowd. As Jose says, 'Watch, Cuz, I'm a push a Lexus, have a phat crib, I'm connected with some real ballers now.'"

On the other hand, a number of inmates credited prison with saving their lives. One was Fast Freddy, six feet tall, weighing 130 pounds, a high school track star before he got addicted to crack cocaine. He was interviewed by a thirty-three-year-old student named Lino, one of my best reporters. Lino was tall, well-muscled, and fairly fierce looking himself, with a dead-eye stare and a scar down the side of his face — fierce, that is, until he broke into a smile, seeing how well he could do this stuff. "I was out there snatching purses from old women, even stole from my mother," he quoted Fast Freddy as saying. "And one day I snatched a purse from an old lady who had a son that was being

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sought by police for three homicides. I became so scared I ran straight to the police precinct and turned myself in.' In Freddy's perspective, if it were not for prison he would have been hunted down and killed. Freddy has taken the time here to acquire a GED and is currently a teacher's aide in the vocational welding shop and is seeking to complete his apprenticeship as a certified welder."

The last story they'd write would be about Christmas in prison. There's no tree or presents, of course. At Woodbourne, a Catholic charity furnishes them all with Christmas cards to mail, and the Salvation Army gives out "Care Bags" containing a toothbrush, tube of toothpaste, comb, shampoo, and a wash cloth — a prosaic collection that doesn't elicit much enthusiasm. The day itself usually starts off fairly grim, they reported. The guards are grumpy, because they have to be in prison, too, not home with their families. And, as Carlos the kitchen worker wrote, "Most of the guys wake up feeling depressed and agitated because they may not have gotten any mail, or they may have been expecting a food or clothing package that may not have arrived. Someone always seems to get into a beef on Christmas morning. If it's not over the shower, it's over the

phone; if it's not that, then it's over the TV, but either way a fight always takes place."

The prisoners tend to wake up thinking about home, about when they were little boys, the age when their happy memories generally come to a halt, what with the teenage years spent in and out of trouble, until the big thing happens that lands them in prison. And in recalling the early years, they understandably feel a little sorry for themselves. "From the cell the snowy world beyond the barred windows is less a harbinger of good news than a reminder of opportunities lost," wrote Julian, the one with the gathered-up dreads. "I'm a little put out by how much the scene below looks like a postcard, not unlike the picture postcards I used to get from U.S. relatives as a boy in Jamaica. As a youngster, the snow always represented something far away, mythical. Now, that's how I feel about Christmas, which I no longer experience."

Food looms large on Christmas, because it's tied to the same memories. Normally, the meals at Woodbourne get cooked twice, once at a central facility, where the food is then put into freezer bags and trucked to the prison, and again when it's dumped into kettles of boiling water before serving. On Christmas, however, the administration goes out of its way to provide something nice, and enough of it so the inmates can eat all they want. This year it would be roast beef, rice, fruit juice, and cake with icing for dessert. "In comparison with the other meals served here," Lino wrote, "this particular meal tasted like something out of a four-star restaurant."

Food and childhood were also on Lino's mind when he woke up that day. "I can picture my family at Christmas preparing to put the finishing touches on the multiple-course meal they have been preparing for the past day or two," he wrote. "Deep down, I can smell the roast pork, rice, and pigeon peas, candied yams and apple pie. My parents' entire home with a warm and cozy feeling The person who I miss the most is my fifteen-year-old son, who I only spent one Christmas with. Whenever I speak with him during this time of the year, I can hear the sadness in his voice."

"Christmases in jail are mostly like any other day. Just when I begin to feel the Christmas spirit, there is something that reminds me of where I am. I remember Christmas 2004 clearly. I was watching a *Soul Train* Christmas special. There were rhythm & blues stars singing Christmas carols. Half way through the show the correction officer called for the count. We were directed to return to our cubicles. On this particular day the count was not correct, and by the time we returned to the recreation room the show was over." ■

Bruce Porter is the special assistant to the dean at the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism.

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THE CAMERAMEN

BY JIM WOOTEN

It was a lazy Sunday morning in January, and I was laboring leisurely through the *New York Times* crossword at a Georgetown café when my youngest daughter tracked me down and breathlessly delivered the dreadful news. My friend Bob Woodruff — the kid brother I'd never had — had been wounded in Iraq.

"How bad?"

"I don't know," she said, then paused. "Pretty bad, I think."

I left the papers on the table, paid for the coffee and, at the door, as we hurriedly left the restaurant, she added a postscript: "Oh, yeah, Dad, his cameraman, too."

"Who is it?"

"I don't know," she said.

Somehow, even without a name, I knew.

Always second billing, these folks with the cameras on their shoulders. Clearly, what they do is at the heart and soul of television news. Yet in nearly thirty years in the business, working alongside some of the most gifted cameramen and women in the world, I came to understand how rarely they're

appreciated by the masters of the network universe, how consistently undervalued their skills, their courage, and their willingness to put themselves at risk to get the pictures.

Yet without them and without the images they provide, it is — as the late Reuven Frank so aptly put it — only radio.

I'd first met Bob Woodruff when we were both posted to ABC's London bureau, where he spent several years honing his skills as a reporter in some of the most dangerous and unpleasant places in the world. Our families grew close, and Bob and I became pals. After he returned to the states, as ABC continued its relentless reduction of its foreign staff, Bob found himself once again being parachuted into all sorts of overseas wars and natural disasters. It was a tough life for him, for his wife, and their four young children — but eventually, it had paid off. Last December, Woodruff was named co-anchor (along with Elizabeth Vargas) of ABC's *World News Tonight*. Through his diligence and his willingness to take on the difficult assignments, he had become a prominent name on the network's marquee, an

ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL: In a rare turn before the lens, the ABC cameraman Doug Vogt at work in Mosul, Iraq, 2005

integral component in its plans for the post-Peter Jennings future.

I don't much like the description, but Woodruff had become a genuine star, and as such, on that Sunday in January, he was not just another reporter on assignment in Iraq. He was ABC's franchise, which meant he would be assigned the very best cameraman the network could provide.

That would be Doug. I knew it before I was told.

Doug Vogt is a modest, soft-spoken Canadian with a flat Alberta accent and the chutzpah of a jewel thief. I'd worked with him too many times to count, in dangerous and noisy places from Sarajevo to the Gaza Strip, from Kosovo and Albania to East Africa and the West Bank — and over all the years and all the miles, he had become not only a treasured friend, but someone I could rely on no matter what.

We were together in Nablus, a city in the West Bank, a few years back, walking with some young Palestinians out toward the edge of town. Abruptly, as we headed past an olive grove beside a small stone shed, Israel Defense Forces snipers on a nearby hill opened fire on us. A couple of the kids were hit (one later died), and both Doug and I felt several rounds whiz past our ears. I had no idea then — or now — whether the Israelis were targeting us because they thought Doug's camera was a weapon or whether they were just firing at anything that moved. I took cover in the shed, but when I peered cautiously around the doorway I saw that Doug was on his stomach, inching his way toward the corner for a clear shot of the snipers and of several more wounded Palestinians out in front of the olive grove. It was a long afternoon, but there he stayed — and in our story that night, there was no need to hedge my description of who was doing the shooting. With his lens, Doug had unmistakably identified them.

I thought about that day after my daughter told me the news about Bob and Doug. Having been in Iraq for both gulf wars, I knew the drill. The military would provide both men with the best treatment available there, then fly them to an American hospital at Landstuhl. I booked a flight to Germany, though I had no idea what I would do or could do there, or how I might be of some help to either man or to their families. But at that moment, caught in blind anxiety, it seemed necessary to be near them.

They come in all shapes and sizes, these cameramen and women.

For example, the midwesterner shooting a 1980 campaign interview with George H.W. Bush, then a presidential candidate, was so

obese, he had trouble breathing. His labored wheezing was so clearly audible on the tape that neither my questions nor Bush's answers could be used in the story.

On the other hand, Tony Hirashiki, a talented and enthusiastic Okinawan who first picked up a camera in Vietnam, is a diminutive fellow who merrily carries a ladder with him on every assignment, including combat. A ladder is not a piece of equipment ever needed by Fletcher Johnson. He's a big guy — six-foot-six — with hands the size of catchers' mitts. Once, in 1994, toward the end of a long and miserable day in what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo, after wading through thousands of dead and dying Rwandans who'd fled their country, Fletcher suddenly stowed his camera gear and told the rest of us to stop what we were doing and help him give assistance to four little

They have correspondents they like and respect and those they don't, and they can reward or punish accordingly with their best effort or perhaps just a little something less.

boys who seemed to be on their last legs. It was the right thing to do, of course, but we needed reminding by someone like Fletcher, who has never allowed his work to interfere with his decency.

They come in all creeds and colors, these cameramen and women, as well as all levels of proficiency and competence. They usually have made judgments on which of the correspondents they like personally and respect professionally and those they don't, and they can reward and punish accordingly with their best effort or perhaps just a little something less. It's true. They know it and I know it.

There are liberals and conservatives among them; intellectuals, too, as well as plodders and diligent yeomen — and yet without exception, despite their distinct idiosyncrasies, what cameramen and women all have in common is that they know for an undisputed fact that whether anyone says so or not, they are not merely important, they are *absolutely essential*, and because they clearly understand that, there is about every single one I've ever known a muscular sense of self, of dignity and pride in themselves and their work. Individually, they're very much like the seasoned platoon sergeant who knows that although the lieutenant is ostensibly in charge, *he* is indispensable. It is *his*

skill and *bis* experience, not the lieutenant's, that will see the unit through the tough times.

They're also among the most independent cusses on earth. Vinnie Gaito, a dapper fellow with a penchant for ascots and pranks, not to mention dirty jokes, took me aside soon after I'd joined ABC News and immediately after I'd introduced him as *my* cameraman and gently explained that while he was *a* cameraman, he was not *mine*. "I know you don't mean anything demeaning, and personally I don't mind it so much," he said, "but others will." It was a valuable lesson.

Jane Hartney, the daughter of a big Irish Catholic family in upstate New York, taught me another. Once, in Bosnia, just outside Gradačac, the two of us were ankle-deep in mud in a front-line trench, literally within shouting (and shooting) distance of Serbs whose weapons were pointed in our direction. We were taping what's known in the business as an *on-camera*, that moment in the story when the correspondent appears on the screen, continuing the narration face to face with the viewer. It had been a relatively quiet morning with only a bit of small-arms fire now and then. Suddenly, in the middle of my spiel, all hell broke loose: heavy machine guns, mortars, artillery, all laid on in the direction and vicinity of the Bosnian soldiers with whom we were sharing the long trench. It frightened me, jolted me, left me utterly speechless. Yet, quite calmly, in between explo-

sions, without taking cover or her eye from the viewfinder, Hartney said, "Take two." Inspired or humbled by her equanimity, not to mention the urge to get out of there in a hurry, I managed the second effort just fine, or maybe it was the third. That evening, screening the videotape she had shot that day, I noticed that when the shelling had begun and all through its duration, Jane's perfectly focused camera had wavered not one millimeter. Not a shudder, not the tiniest reaction.

They're not all as easy to get along with as Jane is. Take my old colleague, Fabrice Moussus, a Frenchman born in Morocco, whose richly abundant talents have made him a preeminent member of the profession, but whose monumental ego, which no doubt befits an artist of his caliber, can sometimes make him a pain in the ass. Fortunately, such moments pass quickly, and he is redeemed not only by the sunnier side of his personality — his wry wit and his bonhomie — but by his pictures, which include those memorable and haunting images of Anwar Sadat's assassination during a military parade outside Cairo in 1981. When the firing began, Fabrice moved immediately toward the reviewing stand where the assassins, with automatic weapons, were finishing off the Egyptian president. He recorded five uninterrupted minutes of gruesome but historic pictures that required no editing for broadcast. It was absolutely remarkable work, though not at all unusual for Fabrice. "I as-

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sumed they weren't shooting at me," he cockily explained.

Sometimes, when their instincts outweigh their judgment, it's hard to keep good cameramen and women from taking risks. One eerily quiet night in the Bosnian city of Tuzla, where Alex Bruckner and I were assigned during the 1993 siege of nearby Srebrenica, Serb artillery on a nearby mountainside suddenly began pounding the downtown area, targeting a Bosnian army headquarters next door to our hotel. While the shells were screaming in and exploding just outside, and while the rest of us hurriedly donned our flak vests and cowered in the corridors, Bruckner — a big, rugged lumberjack of an Austrian — went missing. I searched for him rather frantically and finally found him leaning out a fourth-floor window, his camera on his shoulder.

"Get the hell out of there," I yelled at him from the doorway.

"Not yet," he growled, turning his lens in the other direction. "Great boom-boom. Terrific pictures. Wait'll you see them!"

He was right, of course. And ten years later, when Ted Koppel rode with the Third Infantry Division, broadcasting nightly on its dangerous race from Kuwait north to Baghdad, the ABC cameraman he chose to accompany him was Alex Bruckner. Great boom-boom. Terrific pictures.

There is in many of them, including Bruckner, a certain joie de vivre about the work, as though a risky assignment, like Bosnia or Iraq, were nothing more challenging than a walk in the Bois de Boulogne. Patrick Etcheverry — a Basque who, like Moussus, lives in France — maintains the demeanor of a bon vivant no matter what the situation. One afternoon as we took a break from the action inside Iraq, on a road just outside the city of Arbil, an A-6 Intruder, an American attack plane, came screaming toward us from the south, no more than fifty or sixty feet above the highway. Patrick, camera instantly on his shoulder, was up and running, filming its approach. We shouted at him to put it down, to step away from it, but to no avail. As the plane thundered over us, the exhaust from its roaring engines creating a sandstorm, Patrick turned his lens to follow and record its rapid departure. Afterward, reminded of how easily the camera could be mistaken for a weapon, he smiled with his characteristically superior air and said in his jaunty Inspector Clouseau accent: *Of course, I am well aware of zat, but come now, Jeem. Do you not theenk a great American pilot knows zee difference between zee Ikegami [his camera] and zee Stinger?*

Yet it isn't merely the quirks of the cameramen's personalities that are memorable in the end, but the pictures they provide. The images are the lasting stuff of their legacy.



ABC

LEGACY: Doug Vogt's frozen moment from Kosovo

In Doug Vogt's case, ironically, it isn't a series of action images that remains in my mind as his quintessential shot, but rather a single, frozen frame of video he recorded when we were together during NATO's bombing of the Serbs in Kosovo. All through one somber day we watched the planes flying north and the river of Muslim refugees flowing south into Albania: tractors and wagons piled high with seven or eight families and the stuff they'd brought with them, elderly couples limping across the no-man's-land to the immigration kiosks, an ancient woman muttering insanely to herself as she was pushed along in an old wheelbarrow. As usual, I was watching what Doug was shooting and taking brief notes for the story that night — but I didn't see him focus on a lovely little girl standing all alone on a rise, looking back over into Kosovo, probably for a glimpse of her missing family. When I saw the shot roll past that evening as we screened our tape, I was in awe of its simple, classic composition, its stark beauty, the obvious pain and the clear desperation in the little girl's eyes. She did not move and Doug did nothing with his camera other than hold it steady on her. As a result, it much resembled a still photograph, and yet it was a moving portrait that captured the unvarnished reality of the day.

The same journalistic eye was operating on a road through a scabrous city just north of Baghdad in January as he perched on the edge of the rear hatch of an Iraqi armored personnel carrier filming the dun-colored landscape rolling past. Woodruff was standing in an adjacent hatch. Both were wearing Kevlar vests and helmets, but neither was wearing ballistic glasses. The IED was detonated in the middle of the road, just next to the personnel carrier, which was leading a convoy of several American Humvees and a second personnel carrier. It was an ambush. The insurgents responsible

for the blast opened fire with small arms from three directions.

This is what Doug told me he recalls:

I was blown flat on my back on the APC with my knees still inside. I knew there was a hell of a lot of firing back and forth and I knew my camera was gone and I knew I should be trying to get down, inside the vehicle but I couldn't move. I just couldn't move. Not my hands, not my legs, not my arms, not my fingers, not my head. Nothing. Nothing was working.

Then someone [Vinnie Malhotra, the producer] was pulling me by my boots down through the hatch and into the APC. Bob was already inside, yelling, screaming, pulling at his gear. I could see he was hurt. He was bleeding from his face and I could feel my own blood wet on my own forehead, but I still couldn't move anything for, Jeez, I don't know how long. I was conscious and I could hear the gunfire outside the APC, but I was inside and I was gradually moving again. My arms and hands first, I think. I just don't know. I had no idea whether I was hurt bad or not.

The American troops quickly suppressed the insurgents' gunfire and brought up a Bradley Fighting Vehicle. Doug and Bob were lifted out of the Iraqi APC hatch and carefully lowered to the ground. With some assistance, Doug walked to the Bradley (Woodruff was carried), which immediately took them to a helicopter. They were flown first to the Green Zone in Baghdad, where they received initial treatment from medics. Then, a chopper took them on to Balad, a fully equipped field hospital north of the city, far beyond the point of their ambush.

As surgeons began working on them, the Iraqi dusk turned to night — and by then, both their wives had been notified by the network that their husbands had been wounded. Vivianne Vogt would come from their home in Aix-en-

Provence to the American hospital in Germany, while Lee Woodruff would be flown from Florida (she and her children were at Disney World that weekend). That afternoon, I managed to reach Lee as she was packing. "Don't come to Germany," she said. "Just stand by in Washington because that's where they'll be eventually — and I'll need you there more than in Europe." And so that was the decision.

A couple of days later, at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, I saw them both. Bob was in the intensive care unit, heavily sedated. He was in such bad shape I lost all hope for his recovery. Yet a few weeks later he was walking and talking, and is now undergoing rehabilitation. Somehow, despite their proximity to each other when the blast occurred, Doug had miraculously avoided the level of injuries sustained by Bob. He'd been flown from Iraq to Germany to Washington without any clothes — they'd been cut away and were later returned to him — and I found him sitting up in bed in an orange Marine Corps T-shirt. Vivianne prepared tea. We swapped reminiscences, talked about our children. It almost seemed as though we were just taking a break together as we had so often in so many places in the world — except for the long row of stitches and staples curving across his slightly balding skull. It had been a narrow escape for Doug. It had also, perhaps, been an inevitable injury. After all, in the previous year, he had been in Iraq more than 150 days. I asked him why. "It's what I do," he said.

Doug only deepened my admiration for these men and women who are as much journalists as anyone with a notepad or a microphone and who, with the cameras on their shoulders — leading the way, walking point, recording the images without which there is no television news — are often at risk. ■

Jim Wooten was the senior correspondent for ABC News until his retirement last year.

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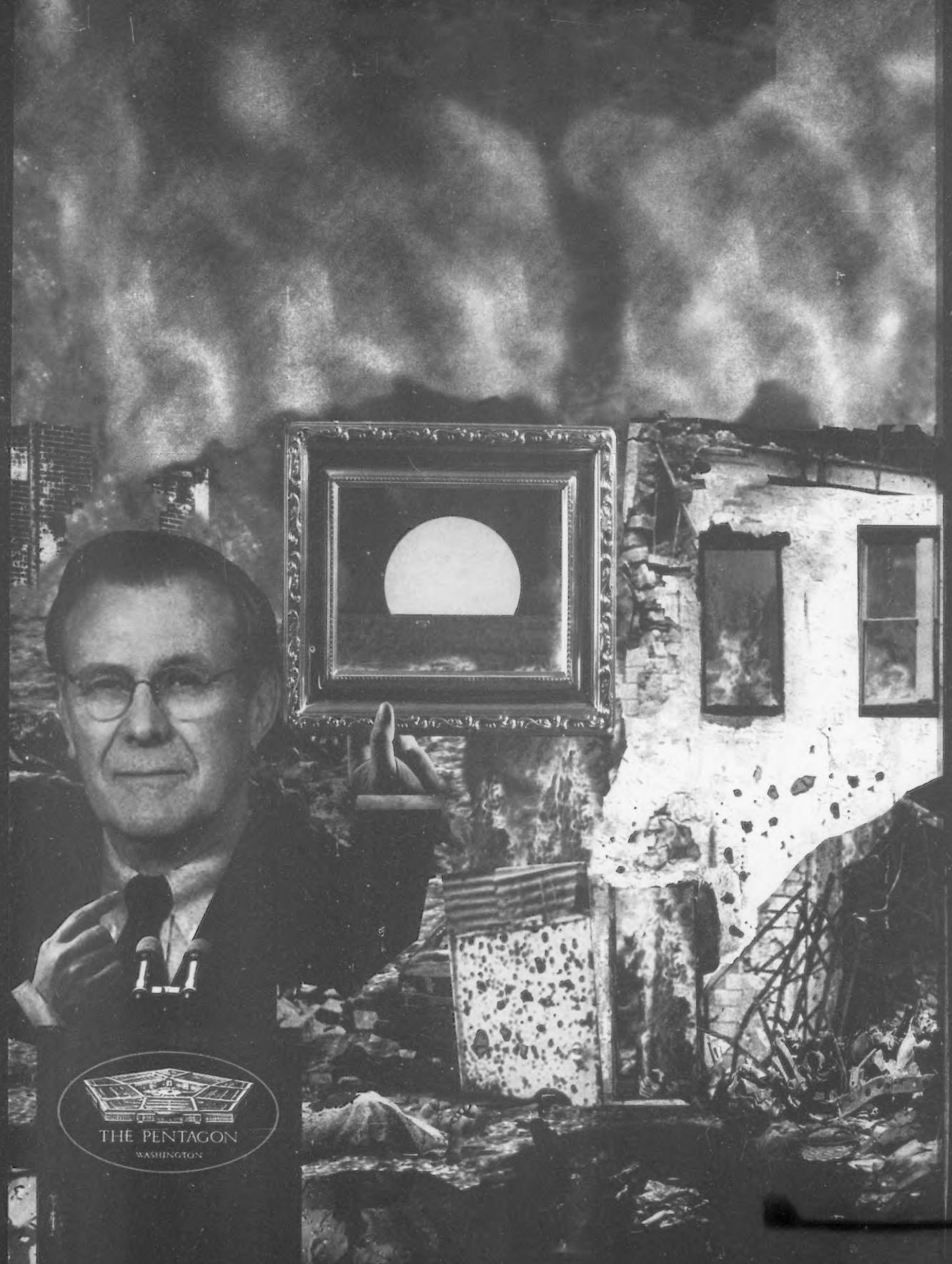
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THE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON

Information has always been a weapon. But in the amorphous 'war on terror,' bombs and bullets are becoming background noise in the battle to frame reality.

MIND GAMES

BY DANIEL SCHULMAN

When the United States launched Operation Iraqi Freedom in March 2003, Sam Gardiner, a sixty-four-year-old retired Air Force colonel, was a regular on *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* on PBS, where it was his job to place the day's events in context. As the campaign wore on, and he monitored the press coverage and parsed the public statements of military and administration officials, he at first became uneasy, then deeply concerned.

A longtime Defense Department consultant who has taught strategy at three of the military's top war colleges, Gardiner had participated throughout the 1990s in a series of war games that simulated attacks on Iraq. He was familiar with Iraq's military and was therefore surprised to hear officials, such as the Army Brigadier General Vincent Brooks, the deputy director of operations of Central Command's headquarters in Qatar, tell the press of ongoing operations to eliminate "terrorist death squads." The allegation struck Gardiner as odd. Matter-of-fact and precise in their speech, military officers would not typically refer to irregulars as "death squads." More important, as far as Gardiner knew, in 2003, when the invasion began, Iraq had no "terrorist death squads."

Gardiner believes that this formulation, which first entered the official vernacular a week after the invasion began, was a skillful execution of a

classic propaganda technique known as the "excluded middle." The excluded middle is premised on the idea that people, provided with incomplete but suggestive information, will draw false assumptions — in this case that Saddam Hussein had ties to terrorism and therefore to Al Qaeda (a connection that administration officials actively pushed during the run-up to the war).

As Gardiner further analyzed the coverage in the early days of the invasion, he saw what he believed was a pattern of misinformation being fed to the press. There was the report, carried by The Associated Press, CNN, and *The New York Times*, among many other news outlets, that Iraq was seeking uniforms worn by U.S. and British troops ("identical down to the last detail") so that atrocities carried out on Iraqis by Saddam's Fedayeen could be blamed on the coalition. There was the claim that prisoners of war had been executed by their Iraqi captors, and there was the announced surrender of Iraq's entire Fifty-first Division. Government officials eventually eased off the POW assertion, and the story of the uniforms was never corroborated and soon disappeared. As for the Fifty-first Division, on March 21 a cascade of news stories, citing anonymous British and American military officials, reported its mass surrender. "Hordes of Iraqi soldiers, underfed and overwhelmed, surrendered Friday in the face of a state-of-the-art allied assault," the AP reported. "An entire divi-

sion gave itself up to the advancing allied forces, U.S. military officials said." Unnamed "officials in Washington" told *The Washington Post* that the division had been taken "out of the fight for Basra." Days later, however, coalition troops were still clashing with units of the Fifty-first there. And two days after it was reported that General Khaled Saleh al-Hashimi and the 8,000 men under his command had surrendered, the general was interviewed in Basra by Al Jazeera. "I am with my men . . . We continue to defend the people and riches" of this city, he told the network. Was this the fog of war or was something else at play?

Gardiner believes that the story of the Fifty-first's mass capitulation may have been part of a psycho-

logical operation, its goal to "broadcast to the other units in Iraq that troops were giving up en masse and very quickly, so there was no reason to resist," he said. "That's a valid psychological operation. But it was directly entered into a press briefing." Gardiner eventually concluded that the flow of misinformation to the press was no accident. It was a well-coordinated campaign, intended not only to confound Iraqi combatants but to shape perceptions of the war back home.

In Iraq then, and indeed in the broader war on terror, it is not the use of information as a weapon that is new, but rather the scale of the strategy and the nature of the targets. Increasingly, the information environment has become the battlefield in a war that knows no boundaries, its offensives directed not just at the insurgents in Iraq and the Taliban in Afghanistan, or at regimes that take an adversarial

'Some of the most critical battles may not be in the streets of Iraq, but in newsrooms.'

— Donald Rumsfeld

logical operation, its goal to "broadcast to the other units in Iraq that troops were giving up en masse and very quickly, so there was no reason to resist," he said. "That's a valid psychological operation. But it was directly entered into a press briefing." Gardiner eventually concluded that the flow of misinformation to the press was no accident. It was a well-coordinated campaign, intended not only to confound Iraqi combatants but to shape perceptions of the war back home.

Throughout the summer of 2003, Gardiner documented incidents that he saw as information-warfare campaigns directed both at targeted foreign populations and the American public. By the fall, he had collected his analysis into a lengthy treatise, called "Truth from These Podia," which concluded that "the war was handled like a political campaign," in which the emphasis was not on the truth but on the message.

As his paper circulated among government and military officials that fall, Gardiner says he received a call at home one night from a spokesman for the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He told Gardiner that his conclusions were on target. "But I want you to know," the spokesman added, "that it was civilians who did this."

The weaponization of information is not original to the war in Iraq, nor is it unique to any military engagement during what has come to be known as the information age. Journalists have always encountered wartime spin, they have been the targets of propaganda and selective leaks, and, on occasion, have been used for purposes of deception (which has resulted, in certain cases, in saving the lives of American soldiers). In *The Art of War*, which remains an influential text among military strategists though

posture to U.S. policy, but at the world at large. Technological advances, meanwhile, have made access to information instantaneous and ubiquitous, erasing longstanding barriers, legal and otherwise, that in the past have protected the American public and press from collateral damage in propaganda campaigns.

In addition, the aggressive manner in which this administration has pursued its information campaigns has in some cases blurred the bright line between two distinct military missions — providing truthful information about the war to the press and public, and waging psychological warfare. This blurring raises questions of credibility not only for the military but also for the press, which has been, on occasion, an unwitting conduit for psychological warfare campaigns. No reporter is immune to this. Nor is any reporter's public. In April, *The Washington Post* reported that Dexter Filkins of *The New York Times* had been used as part of a psychological operation intended to play up the role of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of Al Qaeda's operations in Iraq, in the insurgency. A story leaked to Filkins in February 2004, according to the *Post*, was part of a larger effort — aimed mostly at the Iraqi press — to exploit Iraqis' distrust of foreigners by exaggerating the importance of Zarqawi, a Jordanian, and the foreign element he represents. The *Post* suggests that this effort goes beyond Zarqawi and beyond Filkins, too. Internal military briefings, according to the paper, "indicate that there were direct military efforts to use the U.S. media to affect views of the war."

More than ever, information warfare is a military imperative. The problem is that in the government's haste to sow democratic seeds in the Muslim world, it has at times forsaken the very principles it has

sought to proliferate. "They are screwing with democracy," Sam Gardiner told me.

Indeed, after the Lincoln Group's Pentagon-funded propaganda campaign, in which Iraqi media outlets were paid to run stories written by military information operations troops, was uncovered in late November, the Defense Department announced that it would consider whether it must amend its current guidelines on communications and information warfare. In many ways, this could be a turning point.

Early this year, military and administration officials began to reframe the vague and fluid concept that has come to be known as the war on terror. Though it had always been fought in the informational realm, more and more the conflict was becoming one of values and ideologies, not bullets and bombs. Struggles of this sort are measured not in years but in decades, so officials took to calling it, simply, "the long war."

They also began conceding setbacks. In mid-February, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld addressed the Council on Foreign Relations at its Park Avenue mansion in New York, telling its members that the U.S. was losing the war of ideas. Now, he said, "some of the most critical battles may not be in the mountains of Afghanistan or the streets of Iraq, but in newsrooms — in places like New York, London, Cairo, and elsewhere. Consider this statement: 'More than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media . . . We are in a media battle in a race for the hearts and minds of [Muslims]'. The speaker was not some modern-day image consultant in a public relations firm in New York City," Rumsfeld continued. "It was Osama bin Laden's chief lieutenant, Ayman al-Zawahiri."

The lines that Rumsfeld quoted come from a letter, dated July 9, 2005, said to be from Zawahiri to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Intercepted by the U.S. military, the thirteen-page document makes it clear that Al Qaeda understands that the battlefield has shifted. It must be conscious of its image, for it, too, is in a battle for world opinion. Admonishing Zarqawi for the scenes of brutality that had become his signature, Zawahiri wrote that "among the things which the feelings of the Muslim populace who love and support you will never find palatable . . . are the scenes of slaughtering the hostages." (Zarqawi has publicly declared the letter a fake.)

Two days before Rumsfeld's speech, the International Crisis Group, a nonprofit that focuses on preventing and resolving international conflicts, released a report that detailed just how sophisticated the insurgents in Iraq have become at disseminating their propaganda. The major players, which include Zarqawi's group and three others, all have published magazines and operated Web sites. Most have a spokesman who deals with the press. Seeking coverage, insurgent groups have delivered

videos depicting their military exploits to hotels that are frequented by foreign journalists and often strike locations that will ensure maximum exposure. At points, the report's description of their propaganda network begins to sound remarkably like America's own. ("Websites are used to announce new policy positions, alliances, or strategic shifts, react to breaking news, or comment on how the Western media is addressing the struggle.")

In this war, one thing the two sides have in common is their tendency to fault the media for portraying the conflict unfairly. Jane Arraf, CNN's former Baghdad bureau chief, who is now a fellow at the council, was listening to Rumsfeld's speech that day. She says she had been bothered for some time by the administration's frequent assertions that news accounts about Iraq don't reflect conditions on the ground. That was nothing more than political posturing, it seemed to her. Arraf had dressed in a bright orange jacket for the occasion, which she hoped might improve her chances of being called upon during the Q&A session that followed Rumsfeld's talk. She intended to pose a question to the defense secretary about the U.S. government's use of information. Had she been given the opportunity, which she wasn't, she would have inquired about the gap between the reality reporters see on the ground "and a lot of the comments we see coming out of the administration and the Pentagon." Arraf's observation reveals an interesting dimension of this war: it has become, in part, a contest over the framing of reality, and thus a hall of mirrors for the press.

As Americans struggled to make sense of the attacks of September 11, 2001, Rumsfeld and others within the Bush administration quickly realized that the nation had entered a new variety of conflict that would necessitate more than military muscle. Particularly in the Muslim world, where the motivations of the U.S. were regarded with suspicion.

In November 2001, a secretive Pentagon directorate took shape within the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict, known as SOLIC, whose purview includes aspects of military information operations. Headed by an Air Force brigadier general, Simon "Pete" Worden, an astrophysicist and the former deputy director of operations for the U.S. Space Command, its role was to harness a variety of informational activities to sway public opinion in the Middle East in favor of the administration's war on terror. It was called the Office of Strategic Influence.

Budgeted at \$100 million for its first year of operations, OSI's staff of twenty consisted of experts in psychological and cyber warfare, authorities on the Middle East and Islamic studies, and contractors from Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), the Fortune 500 research and engi-

neering firm that considers itself a specialist in "information dominance." OSI envisioned itself as an incubator for the development of novel information-warfare strategies and a focal point for the coordination of interagency influence operations, Worden, who is now retired from the military, told me. Its staff members had big ideas, but even before they could fully formulate their strategy, let alone carry it out, the office had become the focus of controversy within the Pentagon. Members of the Pentagon's public affairs staff, in particular, were concerned that the methods OSI might use to carry out its mission, specifically those related to the development and dissemination of propaganda, could undermine the Pentagon's credibility. Several people I spoke with, including Worden and another

tremist causes. It would also seek, according to Worden's paper, to "undermine anti-United States regimes through providing unfettered access to global information," possibly directing satellite-fed radio transmissions at repressive nations. Finally, it would combat "negative perceptions of the United States and its goals" wherever they existed — "throughout the world, not just the Islamic world."

Worden saw the Internet as a powerful tool that could be used to divert Muslims from fundamentalist ideology. With tactics pioneered by Internet marketers — such as offering a free music download, or some other lure — young Muslims might be steered to Web sites carrying pro-U.S. messages. Worden reasoned that satellite uplinks and downlinks could circumvent government censors and

'Disinformation and outright lies can be effective, particularly when the promulgator has a long history of apparent "truth-telling."'

— *Information War: Strategic Influence and the Global War on Terrorism*

er former Pentagon official, are convinced that, in the end, OSI was sabotaged from within the Pentagon when word of its reported mission was leaked to *The New York Times* in February 2002. The *Times* and other news outlets reported that OSI had entertained plans to dabble in the darkest arts of persuasion, including planting false news stories in the foreign press. "It goes from the blackest of black programs to the whitest of white," a senior Pentagon official told the *Times*.

Worden, however, contends that OSI was not the Orwellian enterprise that reporters and their Pentagon sources believed it to be. He denies that the office had any plans to misinform or otherwise manipulate the media, which he said was confirmed by a review of OSI documents, computer files, and proposals by the Pentagon's general counsel that was completed in the spring of 2002. In March, Worden provided me with a seventy-page document he co-wrote, along with two former OSI staff members, Air Force Colonel Martin E.B. France and retired Air Force Major Randall R. Correll, following OSI's demise. Worden has not sought to publish the paper, titled "Information War: Strategic Influence and the Global War on Terrorism," believing that bringing up the controversial office will not endear him to the Bush administration as he seeks a federal job. It contains, however, what is to date the most detailed account of OSI's rise and fall.

As the office formulated its influence plan, Worden and his staff came to see OSI's mission as three-fold. First, it would use the informational tools at its disposal to stanch the flow of young Muslims to ex-

provide exposure to Western influences. In "Information War," Worden and his colleagues note that young men often use the Internet to connect with the opposite sex, "sometimes pornographically!" "A focus on the charms of Western women in the here-and-now might divert would-be terrorists from contemplating the purported charms of virgins in the afterlife as a reward for Martyrdom."

Discrediting extremist groups among foreign populations, Worden realized, would take "respected authorities such as journalists, clerics, and artists within that group to denounce" them. But "simply paying them to do so is likely to boomerang," he believed: "Even if some can be so induced, the likely exposure of such tactics will do more to discredit our objectives than any gain achieved." Therefore, "a subtle mesh of inducements and disincentives must be developed. At the outset, we may offer free or increased access to the increasingly high technology means of communications . . . to moderate voices."

A large-scale information offensive using cyber warfare tactics and forms of propaganda, Worden understood, would probably make the press, the public, and even some government officials uneasy, but he made no apologies for it.

Within the United States we must come to a consensus within our society that we will conduct an energetic information war to defeat global terrorism . . . The American public will need to accept that certain information warfare tactics may not seem, on the surface, to be consistent with a global free press. Clearly, this debate will identify some things

that will generally be considered "off-limits," such as deliberate disinformation distributed through open press sources.

While Worden believed that the best informational weapon the U.S. could employ was "the truth and unlimited access to it," he also saw a place, under rare circumstances, for deception. "There is little doubt that disinformation and lies can be initially effective, and that outright lies can be effective, particularly when the promulgator has a long history of apparent 'truth telling.' This suggests that outright disinformation in the case of the United States is somewhat like an information warfare analog to using nuclear weapons."

Though OSI was disbanded, it's likely that it disappeared in name alone, its duties delegated elsewhere within the Pentagon. Donald Rumsfeld said as much when, referring to OSI in November 2002, he told reporters that "you can have the name, but I'm gonna keep doing every single thing that needs to be done, and I have."

Whether or not OSI continued to operate under different auspices, many other organizations, inside and outside the Pentagon, were simultaneously or subsequently created to focus on the information effort overseas.

The Defense Department's Information Operations Task Force, created shortly after September 11, was to focus on "developing, coordinating, de-conflicting, and monitoring the delivery of timely, relevant, and effective messages to targeted international audiences."

The Office of Global Communications, under Tucker Eskew, a deputy assistant to the president and a longtime Republican communications consultant, touted a similar mission. A government organizational chart, dated July 2003, places this office at the nexus of the government's strategic communications apparatus. But Daniel Kuehl, a retired Air Force lieutenant colonel who directs the Information Strategies Concentration Program at the National Defense University, believes the global communications office never lived up to its mandate.

Nor, perhaps, did it ever intend to. "In my opinion, the global issue wasn't the reason why they were created," he told me. "They clearly had a completely domestic focus. They were part of the effort to re-elect the president . . . I'm going to be real pejorative here: Their goal was psychological operations on the American voting public. That was part of the political arm doing that." He added, "You'll notice that not long after the election, the Office of Global Communications no longer existed." (Technically, it still exists, though it has been without a director for more than a year. No new content has been posted on its Web site, once updated regularly, since March 2005.)

The government also outsourced part of the war of perceptions to private-sector firms, including John Rendon's strategic communications consultancy, the Rendon Group, whose services have been retained during "nearly every shooting conflict in the past two decades," as James Bamford, an investigative reporter, wrote in *Rolling Stone* last fall. Hired by the CIA after the first gulf war to pave the way for regime change in Iraq, John Rendon helped to organize the Iraqi National Congress, Ahmed Chalabi's dissident group (which was later responsible for feeding bogus stories about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction to the press). More recently, though, as Bamford has reported, Rendon's firm received a Pentagon contract to mount "a worldwide propaganda campaign deploying teams of information warriors to allied nations to assist them 'in developing and delivering specific messages to the local population, combatants, front-line states, the media and the international community.'"

Meanwhile, the concept of military information operations, or IO, was undergoing a remarkable transformation. On October 30, 2003, Donald Rumsfeld signed a secret Pentagon directive, in the works for at least a year, known as the Information Operations Roadmap. The work of Christopher Lamb, then the Pentagon's deputy assistant secretary of defense for resources and plans, it established IO as a "core military competency, on par with air, ground, maritime, and special operations." Until then IO, which includes such subspecialties as military deception, psychological operations (psyops), and electronic warfare, had been considered an activity that merely supported combat operations, but it has taken on a prominent role in the war on terror.

"It really reflected the personal sense of the secretary of defense that information operations are going to be a larger component of war-fighting in the future than they had ever been in the past," Lamb told me.

The roadmap recognizes that the globalization of the information environment has eroded boundaries that have protected the public and the press from consuming propaganda aimed at foreign populations, making it likely that "psyop messages . . . will often be replayed by the news media for much larger audiences, including the American public."

The Smith-Mundt Act, signed into law in 1948, was designed to prevent the American people from being targeted with propaganda meant for foreign audiences (specifically, it prohibited the broadcast of the Voice of America within the U.S.). But technology has rendered it effectively moot. The question of legality may now rest on the very subjective test of whom the government means to influence. The roadmap itself, which was recently declassi-

fied, puts it this way: "The distinction between foreign and domestic audiences becomes more a question of USG [U.S. government] intent rather than information dissemination practices."

Dressed in desert camouflage — to the amusement of the press corps — James R. Wilkinson, a deputy assistant to the president and the deputy national security adviser for communications, presided over press conferences at Central Command's forward base in Doha, Qatar, as the invasion of Iraq commenced in March 2003. Along with Tucker Eskew, Wilkinson was a member of a tight-knit cadre of government communicators that Dan Bartlett, the former White House communications director (and now a counselor to the president), once referred to as "the band." Its members were responsible for orchestrating the public-relations blitz that accompanied the invasion of Afghanistan, as well as the communications effort that rallied public support for oust-

formation that was provided to the press often proved false. In an updated version of *The First Casualty*, a classic exploration of journalism during times of war, Phillip Knightley writes that at Central Command:

stories were floated, picked up, exaggerated, confirmed and then turned out to be wrong. Basra was secured — it fell seventeen days later. Um Quasa fell daily. Saddam Hussein had been killed; Tariq Assiz had defected — both stories were wrong. There was an uprising in Basra that never happened even though Central Command announced at a briefing that it had. Was this deliberate strategic disinformation?

Some reporters, including Paul Hunter of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, concluded that this was likely the case. In 2003, he told the BBC: "So if word comes out of Centcom that there is an uprising against Saddam's regime, well certainly they can be thinking, planning, hoping that that information

"To use the news media to disseminate [psyop] information — that's where we've gone just terribly astray.'

— Retired U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel Pamela Keeton

ing Saddam Hussein. Wilkinson, in fact, had been instrumental in drafting "A Decade of Deception and Defiance," a background paper released by the White House in September 2002 that purported to lay out the various ways in which Saddam's regime had flouted UN resolutions. (Based in part on faulty intelligence, including the testimony of an Iraqi defector, Adnan Ihsan Saeed al-Haideri, who had failed a CIA lie-detector test nine months earlier, many of the document's claims about Iraq's weapons programs have since been discredited.) Installed as Central Command's director of strategic communications in November 2002, Wilkinson was charged with managing the military's communications operation in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The idea had been that reporters embedded with the military would offer a narrow, on-the-ground perspective of the war, while reporters at Central Command's headquarters in Doha, updated regularly by military spokesmen, would be able to fill in the larger picture for readers and viewers back home. It was, however, the lack of information reporters received there that would become legend. "It takes about forty-eight hours to understand that information is probably more freely available at any other place in the world than it is here," *New York* magazine's man in Doha, Michael Wolff, wrote of his time there.

Not only was news scarce in Doha, but the in-

will be then picked up on and . . . then the local people will build on that and . . . the idea will become reality, even if it never existed in the first place." What Hunter described is the very definition of an information operation, which is designed to create a specific effect in targeted populations.

More than a year later, with the insurgency reaching a critical point, the military attempted what seems to be its most overt — and ham-handed — attempt at media manipulation in recent memory. In October 2004, as U.S. troops prepared to retake the insurgent stronghold of Fallujah, the military took the unusual step of contacting CNN's Atlanta headquarters to offer the network an interview with a commander on the ground who they said was prepared to discuss "major unfolding developments." The "commander" turned out to be a public affairs officer, Lieutenant Lyle Gilbert, who told Jamie McIntyre, CNN's Pentagon correspondent, that "troops crossed the line of departure . . . it's a pretty uncomfortable time. We have two battalions out there in maneuver right now dealing with the anti-Iraqi forces and achieving the mission of restoring security and stability to this area." Gilbert's comments seemed to signal that the long-expected offensive had begun. (Before he talked to Gilbert, McIntyre spoke to a senior aide to Donald Rumsfeld who told him that he would want to cover the pending announcement — it would be significant.) But even as

CNN broke this news, other reporters were being warned off the story by their military contacts. As it turned out, the offensive had not begun and wouldn't for another three weeks. It was widely reported that Gilbert's interview with McIntyre had been part of an apparent psychological operation.

"The purpose of this was actually a bit of deception," Christopher Lamb, the former Pentagon official, said. "We wanted to see how the insurgents we were monitoring would react to this news — that was the purpose." Lamb, now a fellow at the National Defense University's Institute for National Strategic Studies, said this operation was ill-advised. "That was a bad no-no. Public affairs guys must have credibility with the press and in my estimation ought not to be used for that purpose." (Gilbert, for his part, maintains that his comments to CNN were true; he contends it was McIntyre who overstated the import of the operation, which included air strikes on enemy positions and was itself intended as a feint.)

Mark Mazzetti, the former defense correspondent for the *Los Angeles Times* (he recently joined *The New York Times*) who, with Borzou Daragahi, would later break the news of the Lincoln Group's role in paying Iraqi newspapers to run U.S. propaganda, reported at the time that operations like this one were "part of a broad effort under way within the Bush administration to use information to its advantage in the war on terrorism." This, he reported, included using military spokesmen in psychological operations and "planting information with sources used by Arabic TV channels such as Al Jazeera to help influence the portrayal of the United States."

"The movement of information," a senior defense official told Mazzetti, "has gone from the public affairs world to the psychological operations world."

A line of departure had indeed been crossed.

There is a difference in mindset between soldiers who specialize in various military information disciplines. Public affairs officers view credibility as a responsibility, while information warriors tend to see it as a commodity. This mentality is summed up in an unofficial strategy paper titled "Information Warfare: An Air Force Policy for the Role of Public Affairs," written by an Air Force major at the School of Advanced Airpower Studies in Alabama. The paper suggests that public affairs could be the "ultimate IW [information warfare] weapon" since it is "so stalwart in its claims of only speaking the truth." It quotes an unnamed information warrior who says, "The reason I tell you the truth is so that when I lie, you will believe me."

In the military, it has been a longstanding practice to maintain a buffer, or "lanes," between information warfare disciplines, such as IO and psyops, and public affairs. This has been done to preserve the credibility of the officers who communicate with the domestic press. In general, public affairs

officers, or PAOs, believe it's best to tell the whole truth and quickly, even if that truth is damaging. Journalists who work regularly with the military say that PAOs are more often than not refreshingly candid. But the trust that has been built between reporters and the military is easily shattered by the appearance of manipulation, let alone deception. For this reason, the CNN incident sent shockwaves through the public affairs community.

There are several plausible explanations for why the lanes between public affairs and information operations began to break down. One factor could be the sheer frustration that had built in the military over its inability to publicize the real gains it was making in Iraq and Afghanistan, including paving the way for democratic elections in both countries, in news outlets that seemed only to cover setbacks. Then there was the IO Roadmap, which called for integration between public affairs, IO, and psyops. The directive, while noting that the "lanes in the road" must be clarified, was vague about what this coordination should look like in practice. Then, in September 2004, came a sobering report from the Defense Science Board, a federal committee that advises the Pentagon, which said that the government's strategic communications apparatus was "in crisis." It, too, called for greater synergy between public affairs, IO, and psyops to "energize" the communications effort.

In Iraq and Afghanistan, the military revamped its information efforts to conform to a strategic communications model — that is, one in which public affairs, IO, and psyops are supposed to be synchronized and mutually supportive. In Baghdad, the Office of Strategic Communications emerged, under the command of an Air Force brigadier general, Erwin F. Lessel III. In Kabul, a similar organization, known as Theaterwide Interagency Effects, was created to synchronize public affairs, IO, and psyops.

When Lieutenant Colonel Pamela Keeton of the Army arrived in Afghanistan in August 2004 to take over the coalition's public affairs operation, Effects, as it was known, had been in place for several months. The command structure had shifted to accommodate the new organization and Keeton found she would no longer report directly to the commanding general, as is typically the case. "Traditionally public affairs officers are special staff to the commander, just like his lawyer and his surgeon," Keeton told me. "Now I was reporting to a colonel" — who headed Effects — "that had no experience in public affairs, psyops, or information operations. He was being advised by me; he was being advised by his IO guy and by his psyops guy. He was trying to figure out who was right, what we should do." She felt she was in competition to get her point of view across, and, to an extent, kept out of the loop. "They were going to the director of IO for advice on messages," she said.

Shortly before Keeton's arrival, other, more dra-

matic changes had taken place. The officer in charge of information operations, Major Scott Nelson, had taken over as the command's chief spokesman. "He ran the press conferences," Keeton, who is now retired from the military, said. Nelson's dual roles would seem to be in conflict. Nelson, however, who has a background in public affairs, told me that he had no difficulty separating his IO and public affairs responsibilities. Keeton, for her part, made it clear that her gripe lay not so much with Nelson, who she said was simply performing the task that he'd been assigned, but with the system, which has allowed influence operations to bleed into public affairs and allowed IO officers to use the press as "a battlefield tool." Perhaps this was what Nelson was attempting to do when he told reporters, in the wake of a successful national election, that the Taliban had been demoralized. "The election further displays that the Taliban lacks the capability to conduct coordinated, sustained, and effective operations," he told reporters, asserting that Mullah Omar was losing the support of his followers. Information warriors often formulate what they call "truth-based" messages — information that is often vague and one-dimensional, sometimes misleading, and frequently includes statements that are subtly derogatory.

"He was stretching the truth," Keeton told me. "I think what they were trying to do was create an outcome with the Afghan people. They were trying to make the Afghan people feel like the Taliban was less influential than they might think, so it's safe to turn these people in. We're winning, they're losing, so get on our bandwagon." (Nelson told me his statement about the Taliban, like all of the information he provided to the press, was true. In this particular instance, he said, he was unable to back up his claims, when asked by reporters, because that information was classified at the time.)

Not long before Keeton left Afghanistan, in January 2005, public affairs was separated from Effects and returned to its proper lane, under the commanding general. This was something Keeton had fought for during her time there, but she believes it was a letter from General Richard B. Myers, then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that forced the command in Afghanistan to reassess its communications model. "While organizations may be inclined to create physically integrated PA/IO offices, such organizational constructs have the potential to compromise the commander's credibility with the media and the public," Myers wrote in the letter, which was distributed among combatant commanders in the fall of 2004.

Keeton remains troubled by what she saw in Afghanistan, as well as by what she's observed from afar in Iraq, where the Office of Strategic Communications continues to operate. "Somehow in the actual implementation of information operations they have veered from the original mission defined in their regulations," she said. "I don't

know that anywhere in there it says to use the news media to disseminate that information. That's where we've gone just horribly astray."

In Iraq, the encroachment of IO into terrain traditionally controlled by public affairs has manifested itself somewhat differently. As the situation in Iraq has devolved, some PAOs have been enlisted to undertake tasks that would normally be the province of IO or psyops. A Marine public affairs officer who served in Iraq until last fall, primarily in the Sunni Triangle, told me of being asked in a number of cases to draft news stories that the officer believed would be translated and placed, perhaps covertly, in local newspapers. The officer was also asked to write stories that omitted the role of U.S. troops, in one case to obscure their involvement in spearheading an infrastructure project, making it seem as if it were solely a product of Iraqi initiative. (The officer refused to participate in the propaganda efforts.) Particularly when it comes to slanting news stories or press releases to emphasize the self-sufficiency of the Iraqis, that practice appears fairly widespread. Last summer, *Jane's Defence Weekly* reported that the technique has been used to make the Iraqi military appear more competent than it is, primarily by playing up the role of Iraqi troops in military operations. "We say what we want people to believe even if it's not fully grounded in facts or the truth, and that is becoming a very disturbing trend in the military," a Pentagon public affairs officer told the reporter, Joshua Kucera.

A senior PAO who recently returned from Iraq told me that he was most troubled by IO's dealings with the Iraqi press. "Normally all things media go through PA channels, where truth is the currency," he said, asking that he not be named since his candor may not serve him well during an upcoming Pentagon assignment. "When you have IO dealing with local media — especially in a country with no experience with a free press — I think you run the risk of undermining the military's credibility and/or sowing distrust with the local population when IO operators seek to influence, and use truth-based information rather than the simple truth." He continued, "Perhaps Iraq is a unique situation, but I think some of our IO efforts may have hurt our overall efforts at supporting an elected government and democratic, free institutions. Saddam fed the people propaganda for decades — should we continue to feed them propaganda and expect them to support us and/or their elected officials?"

This officer was not speaking only of the Lincoln Group's pay-to-play operation, but of a broader effort that has been under way in Iraq for some time. It involves the funding of fledgling Iraqi media outlets around the country by IO detachments, some of which have provided the local press with covert propaganda. "I believe they view the press as a tool

to be used to influence adversary audiences," the senior officer said. The clandestine placement of propaganda in the Iraqi media appears to date back as early as June 2003, a month after major combat operations ended, and may have begun even earlier. (Near the end of a lengthy AP dispatch, dated June 5, 2003, I found this: "One Baghdad weekly prints articles supplied by the military, most of which don't appear to come from a U.S. or military source. In exchange the U.S. buys and distributes 70,000 of the newspapers.")

To be fair, the local media would not be thriving as they are today without the help of the military, which has gone out of its way to provide Iraqi journalists with access, training in the basics of reporting, equipment, and funding to operate newspapers and TV and radio stations. "But there's always a catch," the Marine public affairs officer told me. "You don't get something for free." Referring to an IO-funded newspaper that operated briefly in Fallujah, the officer said, "The compromise here was we'll fund your newspaper, mister Iraqi editor, but you may have to run coalition information." IO has pursued these quid-pro-quo arrangements quite aggressively, the officer told me, in one case muscling in on a handful of Iraqi news outlets that were already being helped along by a civil affairs unit, whose job it was to work on various infrastructure projects. "They went ahead and wrote an operations order saying that all media projects that had gone on in the past were under their operational control — meaning oversight, funding."

The State Department's Future of Iraq Project, which convened a series of working groups between the spring of 2002 and the spring of 2003 to focus on planning for post-Saddam Iraq, warned specifically against using the Iraqi press as a propaganda platform. "New forms of propaganda are totally out of the question, even with the best of intentions," the project's Free Media working group recommended in a December 2002 paper. "The help the media can give in keeping the social peace (which is actually their natural role in a democracy) . . . is too important to be spoiled by a continued lack of trust from the public." The document also discourages the idea that regional or Western governments should directly fund Iraqi news outlets, suggesting instead that governments "should be allowed only to contribute to a general fund." These, like most of the other recommendations made by this State Department initiative, were apparently ignored by the Pentagon. Rather, under the purview of IO, the Lincoln Group was designated to operate a government-funded propaganda franchise in Iraq that would ultimately be discovered.

Before the Lincoln Group's covert campaign began sometime in early 2005, the firm (then operating as Iraqex) had been chosen to carry out a p.r. contract, worth more than \$5 million, that was overseen by the

coalition's public affairs staff in Baghdad. An army officer, who was involved in selecting the Lincoln Group for the contract and who worked extensively with its employees when they arrived in Iraq in November 2004, told me it had initially been hired to provide basic communications support, such as polling and media analysis, not for the clandestine placement of news stories or paying off the Iraqi press.

"In terms of their proposal, they were head and shoulders above everybody," the officer said. "The problem was they couldn't do a third of what they said they were going to do." He continued, "They were my little Frankensteins. They were sending guys over there that had absolutely no knowledge of Iraqis whatsoever. It was like the Young Republican fucking group — some guy who was working for the governor-elect in Michigan, a guy from the Beltway who was part of some Republicans for Democracy group — not a fucking clue. It was a scheme written up on a cocktail napkin in D.C. They were just completely inept." The public affairs staff became increasingly frustrated with the contractor. Some officers, including two brigadier generals, refused even to work with them. "That's when they moved under IO," the officer said. Eventually, the Lincoln Group was responsible for planting hundreds of stories in Iraqi newspapers.

In late March, an investigation into the Lincoln Group's activities ordered by George W. Casey, Jr., the commanding general of Multi-National Force-Iraq, concluded that the IO campaign was not in violation of military policy. Despite the fact that some information warfare experts, among them Daniel Kuehl of the National Defense University, find this program potentially counterproductive to the government's overall information efforts, the practice of placing news stories covertly in the Iraqi media not only will continue, it will probably expand to other regions around the world unless the Pentagon revises its doctrine, a step it is currently considering. (General Peter Pace, the current chairman of the Joint Chiefs, has called for a formal review of the Pentagon's information policies. "At the end of the day we want the United States to be seen for what it is, an open society that supports free press not only at home but overseas," he told *The Associated Press*. "To the extent that our operations bring that into question, we should review how we're doing it.")

Last July, the Pentagon awarded contracts worth as much as \$300 million to three firms, the Lincoln Group among them, to carry out various psychological warfare campaigns, including the placement of propaganda in foreign media outlets. According to *USA Today*, the efforts, which will be overseen by the U.S. Special Operations Command's Joint Psychological Operations Support Element, will target audiences throughout the world, including those in allied countries. This program appears to flout at least the spirit of the IO Roadmap. "The line that

was drawn in the IO Roadmap," Christopher Lamb told me, is "we don't psyop friends, allies, and neutrals." He went on, "The psyop community has bridled against the restrictions placed on them in the IO Roadmap. They have fought a guerrilla war against those restrictions for years. Their view is that psyops can be directed toward global transregional audiences. My view is that that's not possible because it directs psyops against our own friends and allies and even at our own public." (The military denied my request to interview Colonel James A. Treadwell, the director of the Tampa-based Joint Psychological Operations Support Element.)

If the press, foreign and domestic, remains fair game for psychological operations, the military, as well as the media, could be headed for a credibility crisis. "There are some people who will say we have to do whatever it takes to win this war," said Pamela Keeton, who is now the director of public affairs and communications for the U.S. Institute of Peace, a congressionally funded nonpartisan organization that focuses on conflict resolution. "I think there are places where we need to draw the line — and one of them is using the news media for psyops purposes. It will get to the point where the news media won't trust anybody, and the people won't trust what's being quoted in news articles." Propaganda, even the kind intended for specific audiences, can turn up anywhere — on the news wires, in newspapers, on blogs or Web sites. "They're not going to know that they were written by some information-warfare guy," she said. In the hands of policymakers, she continued, these skewed stories can then be used for political ends — to show that the Taliban is disintegrating, say, or that Iraqis are taking the initiative to protect and rebuild their country, or that the war on terror is going better than it really is. She seemed less than hopeful that the damage could be contained. "It's a Pandora's box."

The Pentagon's "aggressive approach to winning hearts and minds" poses a threat to journalism, Sig Christenson, the president of the professional association Military Reporters and Editors, told me. "Disinformation campaigns," he said in an e-mail, "will in time cause the public to doubt the veracity of our reports." In a separate conversation, Christenson, a veteran military writer for the San Antonio *Express-News*, wondered, "How do you prevent Pentagon propaganda disseminated in Iraq from finding its way into stories back at home? You probably can't, given today's technology, and that means our government has now found a way to circumvent laws forbidding the propagandization of people in the United States — whether it intends to or not."

Among journalists there are varying levels of concern, ranging from significant to mild, over the media's role as a weapon in an information war that

seems destined to go on for decades. Mark Mazzetti, the former *Los Angeles Times* reporter, told me that there is now an increased likelihood that various forms of propaganda will enter the "bloodstream" of the press, and that he sees potential for abuse, but he is not personally concerned that this will affect his reporting. "You go to people you trust," he told me. "I don't trust the military less."

Jane Arraf, the former CNN Baghdad bureau chief, on the other hand, said the information environment has led to a loss of trust on her part and among many of her colleagues in the press, particularly, she said, after her network was used in an apparent military deception. "I've found that I've had to go back to really basic journalism 101," she said. "For me that has meant not really believing anything unless I see it. That doesn't mean I expect everyone I talk to will be lying to me, but it does mean that I recognize that some people have agendas." The problem, as she sees it, is one of politics. "There's so much political pressure on the military, and that sometimes supersedes what they know is the right way to deal with the media."

There is another concern now, too, which is not unique to journalists. It has also been expressed within the military, academia, and the Bush administration itself: Can the U.S. win the information war, as it's being waged?

"There's still a real tendency to think we're just not getting the message across," Arraf said. "But it's not that we're not getting the message across, it's the policies, especially when you're dealing with the Arab and Muslim world." She brought up Abu Ghraib, as many people I spoke to eventually did, which in the hands of America's enemies has become a powerful piece of propaganda, reinforcing notions of American cruelty, arrogance, and despotism that already flourish in the Muslim world — among the very same "fence-sitters," as the military calls them, that the U.S. government is trying to persuade to follow its path to freedom. This exposes a fundamental flaw in the current propaganda war: the message is only as good as the policies behind it. One need look no further than Guantanamo Bay, where men have been held for years with no prospect of a trial to confirm their guilt or innocence, to see that we are in for a long war indeed.

The administration does not seem to see it this way. In the administration's view, the press is partially — if not mostly — to blame for America's losses in the war of perceptions. During his speech to the Council on Foreign Relations in February, Donald Rumsfeld referred to "the false allegations of the desecration of the Koran" that appeared in *Newsweek* last May, which he charged had both incited anti-American riots and led to loss of life. "Our government," he said, "does not have the luxury of relying on other sources of information — anonymous or otherwise. Our government has to be *the* source. And we tell the truth."

It's interesting that Rumsfeld raised this issue in this way, for it is indicative of the way the government has chosen to communicate with the public, often using "truth-based" information — to borrow from the vernacular of the military specialists who deal in the manipulation of words and images — as a substitute for truth. While *Newsweek's* specific allegation turned out to be inaccurate, we now know that copies of the Koran were indeed mishandled in at least five cases at Guantanamo. As for the riots, it is simply disingenuous to say — or worse still, to believe — that the *Newsweek* story alone was responsible for inflaming the Muslim world. If truth is our greatest weapon, as Rumsfeld has said, how can the administration hope to prevail in an information war when it is not honest with itself?

Sig Christenson told me that our leaders now face an "integrity test," which will have a bearing on the war on terror. Considering this, he was reminded of a trip he took to the military academy at West Point in December, where he visited the Cadet Chapel, an imposing gothic church built of granite. Inscribed on a wall to his right as he entered the sanctuary, he saw the Cadet Prayer, which was written by Colonel Clayton Wheat, a former chaplain and English professor at West Point. Ever since, Christenson has reflected often on a particular refrain from that prayer, whose sentiments have perhaps been forgotten during these dangerous and uncertain times. The passage reads: "Make us to choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong and never to be content with a half-truth when the whole truth can be won." ■

Daniel Schulman is an assistant editor at CJR.



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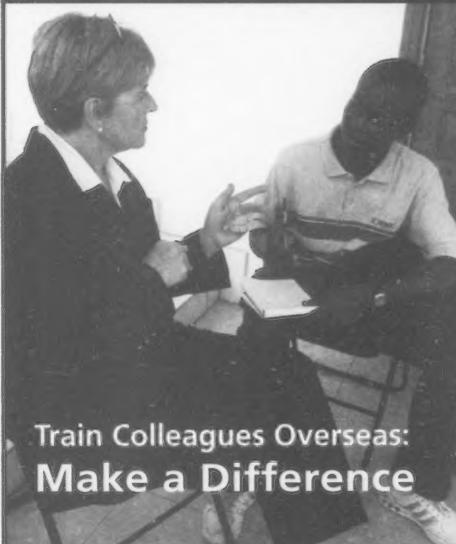
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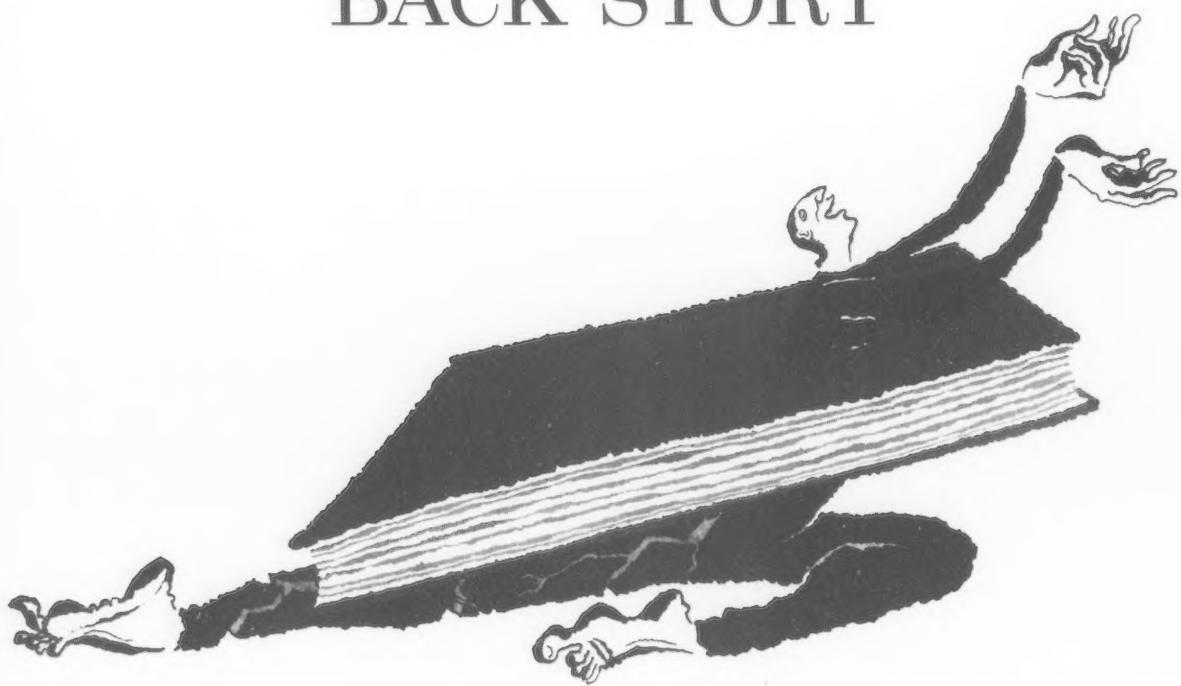
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What one writer did for his book, and what it cost him

BACK STORY



BY JACQUES LESLIE

Ugly," said my surgeon, shaking his head as he stared at an X-ray of my lower spine. An errant vertebra, so dangerously tilted that it resembled a bead about to break from its bracelet, was severely compressing my spinal cord — which explained why I could no longer stand up straight. The obvious solution was immediate surgery, but my book, *Deep Water: The Epic Struggle Over Dams, Displaced People, and the Environment*, was coming out, and I was about to start a two-month, twenty-five-event tour of readings and interviews. Having spent a year figuring out how to approach the subject and another four writing the

book, I looked forward to the tour the way a gold prospector anticipates reentering civilization and spending his stash; the tour was my version of "Here's what I've found." My consequent reluctance to give up the tour didn't faze my surgeon. During the tour, he said, he'd prescribe painkillers; then, when it was done, he'd operate. This sounded reasonable, conceivably even pleasurable, and I instantly agreed. Now I wince at the thought of the word that then occurred to me to describe the arrangement: painless.

The tour was as gratifying as I'd hoped. Just after the first event, a reading at the San Francisco Library in September 2005, I was startled to find

myself crying, so unexpectedly satisfying was the bond of communication that seemed to have formed in the auditorium. Most people are used to thinking of dams as instruments of unmitigated beneficence, doling out extravagant sums of water and electricity merely by interrupting the hydrological cycle. But that interruption is multiplied by 45,000 dams at least five stories tall and more than 60 percent of the world's 200-plus major river systems. To show people that that makes as much sense as blocking a similar proportion of our own veins and arteries is a complicated endeavor — now I'd found it was doable. Over the next two months, I learned how to explain dams.

The purest writers are said to derive the entirety of their professional satisfaction from the act of reading words and putting them on paper, sternly shunning publicity, Solzhenitsyn-like, but if that's the definition of a writer, I'm not one. The readings invigorated me: they gave me energy and hope to write the next book. And as long as each reading lasted, I was oblivious to my dependence on Fentanyl, my painkiller of choice. Unlike the other painkillers I'd tried, Fentanyl is delivered via translucent patches that stick to the skin, which absorbs an evenly released stream of powerful opiate.

My spine had been operated on twice before, and I'd recovered quickly from both assaults. And with a blitheness that my wife attributes to denial, I assumed that this surgery, fourteen years since my last one, would be no different. This conclusion shielded me from anxiety as the surgery approached, at a cost of shock once the invasion was perpetrated. My earlier surgeries were garden variety, on my neck and lower back, but this time the procedure was radical. While I lay splayed on a table my surgeon described as a "rotisserie," he first approached my spine from the rear, carving a vertical incision eight inches long, then decompressed my spine. Next, he turned me over and made a six-inch anterior cut, slightly curved to avoid my navel, and shoved my intestines to one side; that gave him room to scrape bone spurs from my spine. Finally, he flipped me again, realigned and fused three vertebrae, and attached them to titanium plates. All this took nine and a half hours. By the time I regained consciousness in the recovery room, my Fentanyl dose had been tripled and augmented by a chaser of Oxycodone, an opium derivative, and I felt not just pain-free, but euphoric. When a nurse asked if I knew where I was, I said, "Do you want the short or long version?" I found myself so uncharacteristically quip-happy that the nurses delayed releasing me to my room for the sheer fun of having me around. I understood their point exactly, and regretted leaving the recovery room myself. Now I know why: it was the last time I experienced anything resembling physical pleasure for a couple of months.

Unlike the bill it engendered, my hospital stay was unremarkable. (I invite defenders of the current American medical system to justify why, after spending four days in the hospital, my bill attained the fantastical amount of \$232,000. True, having already dunned me for most of my surgeon's fees, my insurer, just as fantastically, covered the bill — it's play money, designed so that only the uninsured need take the sums seriously.) My pharmaceutical roller coaster reached its pinnacle near the end of my stay, and was poised as I left for its steep plunge. Strangely, back pain was the least of my problems; the surgery was a resounding success. But I was now at the mercy of drugs; nearly every sensation I experienced, whether painful or soothing, seemed induced by one drug or another, either as its goal or lamentable side effect. I kept a journal listing all the medications I was consuming and the exact time of consumption:

Saturday, 11-27
 Roxicet 1 1:53 a.m.
 Roxicet 2 6:07 a.m.
 Prednisone 1 8:40 a.m.
 Colace 1 2:07 p.m.
 Roxicet 2 4:10 p.m.

Or I'd run their names through my mind until they sounded like a Latinate cheerleader's chant:

*Clonazepam Clonidine Cymbalta Colace!
 Lactulose Lidoderm Lyrica!
 Prednisone Proscar Tizanidine Triazolam!
 Fentanyl! Fentanyl! Fentanyl!*

My hands were constantly cold, no matter how warm the room. My bowels closed shop. I turned weepy. For the first time in my life, I found food repulsive — and if I forced myself to eat, I quickly grew bloated. My stomach, of course, was in the midst of reorganizing itself, having recently suffered its own version of re-settlement. I rarely slept for more than an hour at a time, and did not once sleep for more than four hours a night. Seemingly against my will, I'd become a dissolute, watching TV at three in the morning, calculating the hours until the next pill, dreading the endless night. Now the bed became my tormenter, which I nevertheless occupied most of the time, as if it and I were partners in a horrific marriage. My real wife had long ago fled to another bedroom to avoid my nocturnal throes. Now she looked after me with abiding concern, constantly circling between pharmacy, supermarket, kitchen, and bedside, while depleting her own fragile resources with worry.

My conversations with her chiefly revolved around the properties of drugs, as I got to know the medications' schizophrenic personalities. The surgery had jangled my lower spinal nerves, causing

the skin of my left thigh to feel as if it had turned into molten shattered glass. For this I was prescribed a nerve pain reliever called Lyrica, whereupon my right foot swelled prodigiously and grew intensely itchy — I was allergic to the drug. Roxicet, two tablets of which I swallowed every four hours, produced jackhammer-proof constipation; the antidote, Lactulose, made me diarrhetic. Clonadine lowered my blood pressure. Some drugs did nothing at all.

After three weeks, my surgeon told me to cut my Fentanyl dose by two-thirds, and I found myself newly staggered, with barely enough energy to talk. But this first step in my opiate withdrawal last

It's true that my life narrowed, until all it contained was my pain and the drug that nullified it and the book tour that justified the drug.

ed only a few days, and I consoled myself with the thought that the second step, elimination of the final twenty-five-microgram-per-hour Fentanyl dose, would be easier. It wasn't. It takes two weeks to develop a Fentanyl addiction, and, to facilitate the book tour, I'd been taking it for three and a half months. Five weeks after the surgery, I removed the last of my patches, and began a descent into what my surgeon called a "one-in-a-thousand" case of drug withdrawal — which is to say, I'm exquisitely sensitive to opiates. "You'd make a terrible drug addict," said the surgeon, and I lacked the energy to laugh. At night my legs cramped violently every twenty or thirty seconds, eliminating any prospect of sleep. In desperation my wife called a local rehab unit and located a nurse. She was full of understanding and interesting information — such as that the spasms are the reason withdrawal is called "kicking the habit" — but knew of no shortcuts. We consulted the surgeon, his young colleague, my GP, a homeopath, an acupuncturist, and a pain-management specialist, while sleep became ever more elusive. Clonadine was supposed to ease my spasms, but the only night I took it, nothing happened, and in desperation I ended up taking five pills instead of the prescribed two. Only the next morning was I informed that the quantity I'd consumed could have killed me. The GP, who'd himself worked in rehab, said baths in steaming-hot water alleviated the spasms, and on a few nights, I'd take desperate soaks at 3 or 4 a.m. I'd lie in the tub, for once not cold but abruptly far, far too hot, and I'd feel stunned by the procession of uncom-

fortable sensations, the speed with which all my bodily systems had shifted into idle. Then, as the opiates wore off, the pain they'd masked surfaced, and my thigh pain intensified. I turned gaunt and gray. By this time I was supposed to walk up to an hour a day to aid my recovery, but on most days I could barely muster strength for a single plodding shuffle to the nearest street corner and back, before returning to bed.

I'd covered the Vietnam War, navigated through rural India and southern Africa to write *Deep Water*, and grown used to thinking of myself as invulnerable. It was an illusion, of course, arguably useful, but now it fell away; I'd discovered my fragility, my approaching mortality. When a friend suggested I read a new, masterly biography of Stalin, I cringed at the thought of contemplating so much death. I was mortified by the thought that some day I might again become so pain-ridden that only opiates could provide relief, and I'd have to choose between addiction and intense pain. The future seemed newly foreboding.

And my health grew worse. On Christmas morning, I felt pain behind my right eye, which intensified as the day wore on. The next morning I received emergency laser surgery for a rare form of glaucoma called "plateau iris syndrome" — my irises had flattened, blocking the flow of fluid to the front of the eyes, potentially causing pressure to build until the eyes explode. The eye doctors hypothesized that Cymbalta, one of my many medications, induced the attack, a reasonable assumption since I'd started taking it only two days earlier. I stopped using the drug, but two weeks later, I experienced another attack (this time brought under control with eye drops), and more drugs fell under suspicion. What unnerved me was the irony of having plateau iris syndrome: my own eyes embody the lesson of dams.

Another month passed before I "came back," as my wife puts it — before I felt well enough to resume my usual activities. She thinks I'd "left" five months earlier, back when I started the painkillers. It's true that my life narrowed then, until all it contained was my pain and the drug that nullified it and the book tour that justified the drug — and of the two, the tour seemed the more powerful palliative. Nearly three months have now passed since the surgery, and my hands are warm, my breathing is unlabored, the future again holds promise. I understand that my bargain was Faustian, but I don't regret it, not for a moment. By my definition, it's what writers are willing to do for their books. ■

Jacques Leslie's book, Deep Water: The Epic Struggle Over Dams, Displaced People, and the Environment, was published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux. It won the J. Anthony Lukas Work-in-Progress Award and was named one of the top science books of 2005 by Discover Magazine.

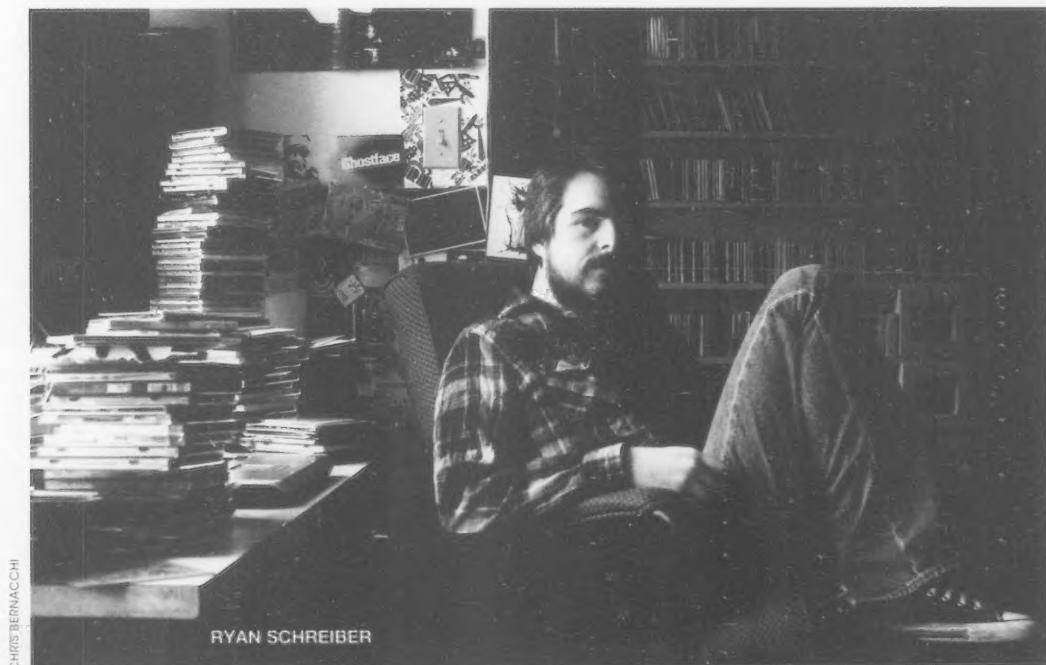
In little more than a decade,
Pitchfork has grown from a labor of love
 into the Web's foremost musical tastemaker

LISTEN TO THIS

BY KIERA BUTLER

Recently, the legendary *Village Voice* rock critic Robert Christgau told me one of his favorite facts about the music industry today: there are more hours of music recorded in a single year than there are hours in a year; it is literally impossible for one person to listen to everything. Even the most obsessive music zealots couldn't come close, but it's funny to picture them trying — a nation of rock-nerd zombies joylessly trolling the MP3 blogs, night after waking night. Nick Hornby meets *The Twilight Zone*.

For those who don't have forty hours a week to devote to panning for gold in the vast muddy river of new releases, there's *Pitchfork* (www.pitchfork-media.com), the eleven-year-old Web magazine that does the sifting for you. The main thing that distinguishes *Pitchfork* from the *Rolling Stones* and *Spins* of the world is its focus: album reviews — five new ones every day — that are aimed at helping the overwhelmed listener. "In some other magazines, what this band or that band did on the road gets more words than 'Is the record good?' and 'Should you buy it?'" says Ryan Schreiber, *Pitch-*



fork's thirty-year-old founder and editor in chief. Not so at *Pitchfork*, where the other features on the site — breaking news about the independent music scene, interviews with musicians, and features — are merely extras.

The *Pitchfork* staff does have forty hours a week to spend filtering through new music, which is good because in their Chicago offices the first thing I noticed were the mail bins, stacked high against several walls and stuffed full of CDs. New releases come in at the rate of 500 to 700 every month from record labels, promoters, and musicians who hope to catch the staff's attention. It's not every day that

Print critics be forewarned:
If you don't pay attention to
Pitchfork's picks, you risk
looking like 'a bunch of old,
stupid sourpusses.'

the *Pitchfork* staff finds real gems in those bins, but when it does, the critical world listens.

Last year, *Pitchfork* was among the first to discover Clap Your Hands Say Yeah, an unknown, unsigned band from Brooklyn. After a *Pitchfork* reviewer in New York recommended it, Schreiber and the rest of the staff were floored by what they heard. In June, *Pitchfork* posted an enthusiastic review, praising the band for its "dizzily wowing vocal harmonies" and "richly buzzing" phrases. They rated the album a rare 9.0 on their ten-point scale, and in the months that followed, critics at major papers (*The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *Chicago Tribune*, to name a few) weighed in. "*Pitchfork* is taken seriously," says the freelance rock critic Jason Gross. "To print critics, it's like, 'We're going to look like a bunch of old stupid sourpusses if we don't get in on this ASAP.'"

It's true. David Carr, the forty-nine-year-old *New York Times* media columnist and pop-culture reporter, considers *Pitchfork* his best defense against becoming the dreaded Old Stupid Sourpuss. "I get records at work, and every once in a while I'll put them in, but I'm, like, a dad," says Carr. "I can't be walking around my house with headphones on all the time."

As it has influenced everything else, the Internet is influencing rock music criticism, and in the rock criticism community, *Pitchfork* has become the first major Web-based tastemaker. Carr sometimes invokes *Pitchfork's* opinions in his reviews. "In journalistic terms, *Pitchfork* allows you to express in short form that at least one tribe on the Web holds this band or that band in good regard," says

Carr. "It turns everything into apples, if you know what I mean."

It's fair to describe *Pitchfork's* founder, the baby-faced Schreiber, as the antisourpuss. He's infectiously friendly, and he can't sit still when he talks about music he loves. In fact, during the hours I spent at *Pitchfork*, he barely sat still at all. As a kid in Minneapolis, Schreiber was lonely. His parents, both real estate agents, were out a lot, and even in elementary school he immersed himself in music culture. "I was so into music I was kind of weird," he says. "Music was all I ever really wanted to talk about." As I talked with Schreiber and the conversation cycled again and again back to bands and albums, I realized that music is *still* all he really wants to talk about. I asked him what he liked to read. "All I ever read actually is music reference and music publications," he says.

In 1995, Schreiber was nineteen and fresh out of a lackluster high school career, with no real desire to go to college. So from his childhood bedroom he launched *Pitchfork*, posting a few reviews every month and interviewing every band he could badger into talking. After a few months, he began updating the site daily, and for the next few years he worked part-time as a telemarketer in the evenings so he could build *Pitchfork* during the day.

Over the next ten years, Schreiber expanded the site, soliciting freelance reviews and selling ads. After stints in a series of midwestern basements and bedrooms, *Pitchfork* made its above-ground debut in its new Chicago offices in the summer of 2005, when it became clear that the site — with a full-time staff of five, more than forty contributing writers, and 160,000 daily visitors — had finally outgrown the basement. Schreiber likes the new offices because "they remind me of an old detective agency." Next door to a law office in a small building in Chicago's Logan Square neighborhood, *Pitchfork's* five-room suite is packed with thrift-store desks and squeaky chairs, and a handful of no-frills laptops. No private offices; no conference rooms. Close quarters ensure lively discussion. (On the day I visited, someone said, "Let's hope the Red Hot Chili Peppers never put out another record"; someone else wondered aloud how such an "aesthetically unappealing band" could have gotten as big as it did, while others offered theories and explanations.)

Because *Pitchfork* has become a notorious arbiter of trends in rock, some readers have begun to wonder what the site's review-writing formula is — and whether there is a secret recipe an artist must follow to produce a *Pitchfork*-approved record. In 2004, Loren Jan Wilson, a University of Chicago undergraduate, went so far as to devote his thesis to the subject. Using a computer program he wrote, Wilson analyzed *Pitchfork's* writing to detect patterns in re-

views. He found that artists that sounded "sad" or "plaintive" often elicited good ratings, while those that reviewers described primarily as "confident" or "assured" were less likely to score high. Using what he learned, he wrote two songs designed to fill all the criteria for a favorable review, but that part of his research was inconclusive, as Schreiber and company never reviewed the songs.

On the day I visited the *Pitchfork* offices, I came ready to witness the reviewing formula in action. I watched as Schreiber and Scott Plagenhoef, the site's thirty-two-year-old managing editor, hunched over their laptops discussing the posting schedule for the next week.

"How big do we think the new Coup album is?" said Schreiber.

"It could B-List," said Plagenhoef. ("B-List" reviews appear second on the site's homepage, under the featured review of the day.)

"Ughhh," groaned Amy Phillips, the twenty-four-year-old news editor from the next room. "That record is terrible."

And the *Pitchfork* staff swears that this is how it goes. There is no formula except what seems too obvious: they pluck discs from the bins that they recognize from labels' release schedules and friends' recommendations, and sometimes they try a disc out just because its name or cover art appeals. The staff in the office discusses new releases, and *Pitchfork*'s writers weigh in from all over the country on a staff message board. After a bit of talking, writing, and listening, everyone has figured out how he or she feels about a record, and someone is in good shape to write a review.

As haphazard as the process seems, there's a lot of history behind the particular tastes of *Pitchfork*, a history that is inextricably tied to Schreiber's musical coming of age. In Schreiber's case, a lot of the changing a person goes through between the ages of nineteen and thirty — the widening of perspective and the solidifying of identity — happened through music. "When you're younger, there's a lot of resistance to listening to music the kids you don't like listen to," says Plagenhoef. "I think once you get a little older, that clique-ish approach to listening to music changes." In the late 1990s, Schreiber began to pull away from the insular world of indie rock he once inhabited, where musicians produced records cheaply on independent labels. In that world, loudly despising the way corporate record labels commodified music was de rigueur. Sick of the strict indie code of ethics, Schreiber began to pay attention to the mainstream, and he was surprised at how much he liked Top 40 sensations like Destiny's Child and Gwen Stefani. From the echoes of electronic music he heard in pop songs to the Indian bhangra beats in the hip-hop that was popular at that time, he realized that mainstream music drew its influences from interesting and diverse sources.

But even as Schreiber's tastes were changing, *Pitchfork*'s readers remained deeply loyal to indie rock, and when *Pitchfork* began to cover the mainstream, readers resisted. Indie rockers are famously suspicious of anything that is commercially successful, and some readers assumed that *Pitchfork* was being paid by promoters to review popular music. Others, who couldn't quite believe that *Pitchfork* reviewers genuinely liked, say, the new Missy Elliot single, assumed the new coverage was, as Schreiber put it, "some sort of ironic flourish."

Schreiber knows that if readers suspected that he'd crossed the line from covering the commercial music industry to participating in it, he would lose credibility fast. Thus he is slow to discuss *Pitchfork*'s commercial success. In December 2004, because of a computer error, a Web page revealing the site's ad revenue became publicly available, and many readers were surprised at how much money the site was pulling in — and outraged that reviewers still earned only a measly \$20 a review. When I asked Schreiber questions about finances, he squirmed and told me he didn't want to talk about the site's revenue because "that's not how we really define ourselves." But a current rate card reveals that the site is becoming increasingly financially competitive. Ad rates range from \$3.50 to \$8 per thousand impressions, with minimum buys of 100,000 to 300,000 impressions, depending on the size of the ad. In order for a medium-sized ad to appear 250,000 times on *Pitchfork*, for example, an advertiser would spend \$1,250. (Web advertising rates vary widely — and they're often negotiable — but *Pitchfork*'s published rates are on the low side of average among sites that attract a young, hip demographic. They are similar, for example, to the rates of the media gossip site *Gawker*.)

Among older music critics, there's a kind of nostalgia for a time when albums didn't arrive in the mail every day, when finding out about new bands meant becoming friends with the record store clerks in the know. Before 1966, when a seventeen-year-old Swarthmore freshman named Paul Williams founded *Crawdaddy!*, the world's first rock magazine, hardly anyone had even considered writing about rock; music journalists stuck to classical and jazz. One year after *Crawdaddy!* appeared, a young Jann Wenner started *Rolling Stone*, and in the years that followed, critics like Lester Bangs, Richard Meltzer, and Greil Marcus proved to the world that rock was worthy of analysis; they wrote popular music into the cultural consciousness.

Crawdaddy! folded in 1979, but *Rolling Stone*, like the Rolling Stones, is still at it. And according to Schreiber and Plagenhoef, the magazine, like the band, also looks old and tired. Around the *Pitchfork* office, a mention of *Rolling Stone* elicits a collective

wince. "It's definitely an establishment magazine," Plagenhoef says. "It's the *opposite* of youth culture, which is what it's trying to cover."

In covering youth culture, the *Pitchfork* staff has the advantage of being overwhelmingly youthful. The senior citizens of *Pitchfork*'s stable of writers are in their mid-thirties, and the youngest are teenagers. Besides the practical benefits of their age (late nights at rock shows are no problem; family responsibilities are minimal; bands often speak more candidly with a peer than with some old dude), Schreiber likes the passion that young writers pour into their reviews. If you browse the archive, that

Still, the writing can at times be 'impenetrable and masturbatory.' 'Let's talk about reductionism, shall we?' begins the recent review of a Stereolab record.

passion is hard to miss. Phrases like "on all levels, a total fucking triumph," and "fucking supersonic" are not uncommon ways to end a review.

But youthful passion has its limits. Although he enjoys *Pitchfork* critics' enthusiasm, Robert Christgau thinks their reviews tend toward "opinion-wielding for its own sake." *Pitchfork*'s writers, he says, simply aren't old enough to be able to put an album in its context, so they opine freely, blissfully ignorant of the past sixty years of rock history. "If these guys would like to leave their world, and especially go back in history, that's much harder. They just haven't heard enough music."

He has a point. Some of the reviews do seem to scream I-just-took-this-great-creative-writing-workshop-at-Bard, especially the ones that read more like prose poems than rock criticism. But free-form music reviews are nothing new. In his 1974 essay, "How to be a Rock Critic," Lester Bangs wrote about the willingness of magazines to publish pretentious screeds. "Most of them will print the worst off-the-wall shit in the world if they think it'll make 'em *avant garde!*" he wrote. "You could send 'em the instruction booklet on how to repair your lawn mower, just write the name of a current popular album by a famous artist at the top of the cover . . . and they'll print it! They'll think you're a genius!"

While *Pitchfork*'s most opaque and pretentious reviews are a few notches of formal innovation short of a lawn-mower manual, Plagenhoef admits the writing can be "impenetrable and masturbatory." He's right. "Let's talk about reductionism, shall we?" begins the recent review of a Stereolab record. But the blather is

far less common these days, especially because a few years ago, one particularly off-the-wall review contained so many factual errors that Schreiber had to retract it. You learn from your mistakes.

And from each other. Fundamental questions — like what makes a record a perfect 10 — come up again and again in continuous staff discussions. Schreiber thinks a 10 is a "timeless classic," but Plagenhoef isn't sure "timeless" matters. "I don't think what someone might think about a record in five or ten years should affect how we think about it today," he says. (On the perfect-zero front, the staff is more unified. They think about perfect zero the same way that Dante thinks about damnation: to deserve it, you have to do something deliberately foul. When The Flaming Lips produced an album that required four stereos and four copies of the album for a complete listening, the *Pitchfork* staff agreed to take the release as an act of hostility. It was a zero.)

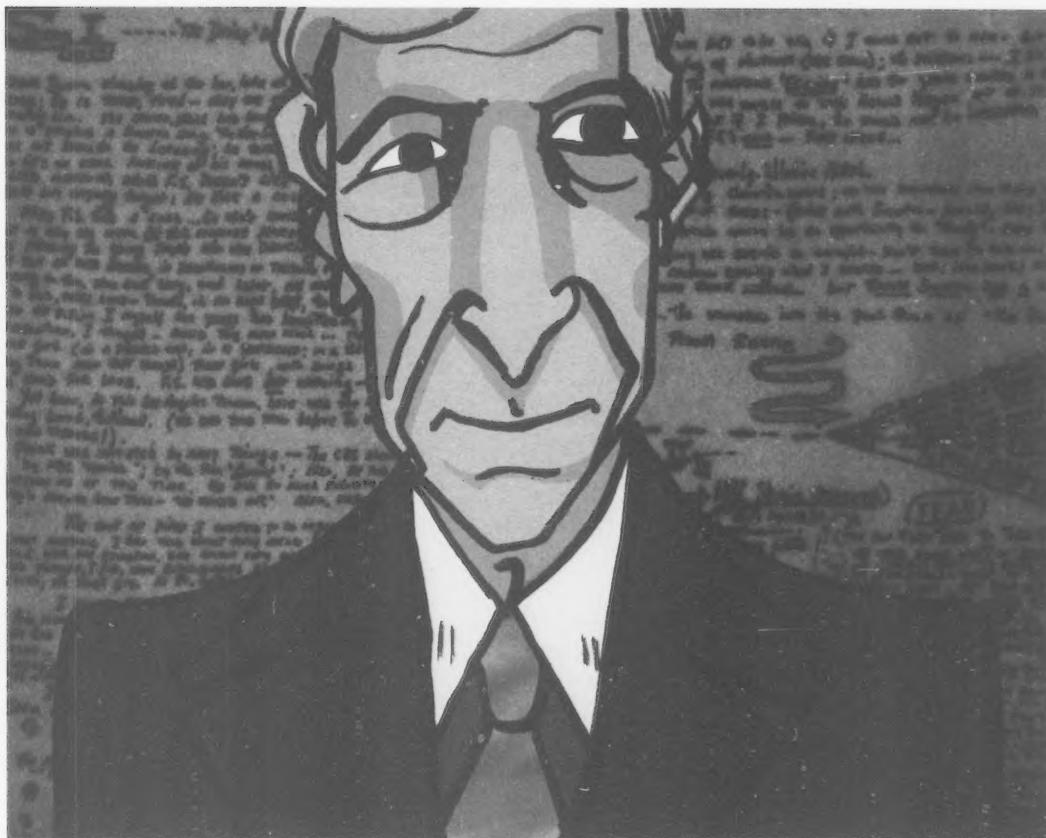
Joe Levy, the executive editor of *Rolling Stone*, said of *Pitchfork*, "Those guys are working in the great, uncleared forest, free to grow without editing." That isn't exactly true. In the past several years, Schreiber and Plagenhoef have refined the editorial process, and writers sometimes go through several drafts before they post their reviews. But when unexpected problems arise, the staff makes decisions on a case-by-case basis, and sometimes those decisions draw criticism. Last year, Schreiber and Plagenhoef decided that the reissue of Neutral Milk Hotel's "In the Aeroplane Over the Sea" album deserved more than the 8.7 rating they had given the original release. So they pulled the old review and replaced it with a new one — and a new rating of a perfect 10.0. Schreiber was surprised when readers complained. "I didn't think anyone would miss the old review," he wrote in an e-mail. "Turns out people will whine about anything."

Figuring things out as you go along isn't always comfortable or easy, but working in that great, uncleared forest also has its advantages. Schreiber has discovered that running *Pitchfork*, like finding great records, is a matter of listening widely and making up your mind; talking about your strong opinions with people who have strong opinions of their own; and then diving once again into your pile of unopened CDs and getting back to the real work of running the site. There's a lot going on at *Pitchfork* these days: the staff is planning the site's second annual music festival for July, and they're in the midst of expanding the site so it can support more MP3s so readers can do more listening. Throughout the day I spent at *Pitchfork*, Schreiber darted around the office, fielding phone calls and making plans. But every once in a while, he would look up at those towering crates of CDs and tell me guiltily, "I really need to go through those bins." ■

Kiera Butler is an assistant editor at CJR.

IDEAS & REVIEWS

ESSAY



JASHAR AWAN

A Work in Progress

Gay Talese's curious new memoir extols the virtues of not writing

BY ROBERT S. BOYNTON

On the morning of July 13, 1993, *The New York Times* published an article about a man whose wife had cut off his penis while he slept. Appearing in the Science section, surrounded by clinical diagrams and a discreet headline (ARTFUL SURGERY: REATTACHING A PENIS),

it introduced its readers to the tabloid saga of Lorena and John Wayne Bobbitt in the most tasteful, *Times*ean manner possible ("Hmm, let's play this as a *medical* story," you can hear the editor saying).

Soon after, a rumor circulated through the literary world that Gay Talese was writing about the inci-

ESSAY

IDEAS & REVIEWS

dent for Tina Brown, who had a year earlier been named *The New Yorker's* editor. *New Yorker* traditionalists were aghast. Could it be that the woman charged with revving up the venerable weekly had assigned an article about genitalic mutilation to America's foremost journalistic chronicler of sex?

Like most rumors, it turned out to be true ("Okay, you're on for the penis chopper," Brown confirmed to Talese by fax). The summer passed with no sign of the piece, as did fall and winter. Knowing Talese was a famously dogged reporter, I dutifully scanned each issue for his byline. Tina eventually left *The New Yorker*, Lorena reclaimed her maiden name, and John reinvented himself twice: as a porn star, then as a Vegas act. But I never heard more about the article.

On a sweltering August afternoon, a decade after *l'affaire Bobbitt*, Gay Talese greeted me wearing a stylish, three-piece suit and led me to the office he keeps beneath the Upper East Side townhouse he shares with his wife, the book editor/publisher Nan A. Talese. I was there to interview him for my book, *The New New Journalism*. To my mind, Talese's work prefigured much of the best of today's long-form journalism. I had never thought he fit the description of the "new journalist" Tom Wolfe offered in his 1973 book on the subject. Sure, his work reads "like a story," but unlike Wolfe, Hunter S. Thompson, and other members of the movement, Talese (much like John McPhee) had dedicated himself to indefatigable reporting on, and understated writing about, the pedestrian, the ordinary.

Talese's cool, well-appointed office looked more like one of the posh doctor's waiting rooms on nearby Park Avenue than any writer's garret I had ever seen. The

air was infused with the pleasant fragrance of freshly cut flowers, and on our way to his desk, I spied a stack of file boxes leaning against a wall. Smack in the middle was one labeled: "The Bobbitts — a work in progress (1993-1994)."

Talese explained that he was in the thick of a new book, a "memoir" of sorts (he doesn't like the word), in which he revisited his stories from the past forty years: the civil rights movement in Selma, Alabama, a building on East Sixty-third Street through which had passed nearly a dozen restaurants, a female Chinese soccer player

The publisher is trumpeting it as one of those grand literary memoirs. Nothing could be further from the truth.

who had brought shame to her country by missing a crucial kick, and, yes, the Bobbitts, whose story he was *still* following.

Frankly, it sounded more like a train wreck than a memoir, although I didn't say so. After all, the rare autobiographical passages in his earlier works were as formal and confining as the suit he wore that steamy afternoon. Maybe it was his decade at the *Times* or his fifties-era allergy to introspection ("I had never given much thought to who I was," he confesses in *A Writer's Life*). Whatever the cause, Talese was the *last* person I could imagine composing a memoir, filled with the requisite doses of false modesty and accounts of "adversity overcome."

"I write about stories that are connected to my life," he announced at the outset of our interview. In response to my puzzlement, he detailed the autobiograph-

ical roots of books like *The Kingdom and the Power*, *Honor Thy Father*, and, most recently, *Unto the Sons*. Chalking the statement up to a variation on the "write what you know" chestnut, I steered our interview toward other matters.

Almost three years later, having read *A Writer's Life*, I think I finally understand Talese's credo. It all hinges on the meaning of the word "connected." What for some would be a severe limitation of scope ("stories connected to my life") is for him a license to roam wherever his reporting takes him. Anything he reports on becomes a part of his life. In a sense, his philosophy is *L'histoire, c'est moi*.

The result is a kind of inverted narcissism. Whereas the classic self-obsessed narcissist detects traces of himself everywhere, Talese's omnipresent "self" consists solely of other people's stories. The result is what he calls his "Calabrian" sensibility. "My point of view is a point of view that sees many sides!" he says in *The New New Journalism*. More than many journalists, and perhaps even more than McPhee, he has an insatiable appetite for information. He is like the *Times* patriarch Adolph S. Ochs, who, comparing a story in that day's *Times* to the version in a competing paper, is upset that his reporters have missed several details. Unsatisfied with an editor's explanation that the missing facts were minor, Ochs glares. "I want it all," he says.

"Wanting it all" has been a curse for Talese. Having to work his way through a story's tangle of facts and connections has curtailed his output to roughly a book every dozen years. But the curse is also the key to his literary gift. The passages where Talese succeeds in translating his information-drunk sensibility into prose — when he discovers what he calls "the fictional current that flows beneath the stream of reality" — are some of the most captivating works of journalism I've ever read.

We see it in the magical opening

section of *Thy Neighbor's Wife*, in which the seventeen-year-old Harold Rubin ogles (and later masturbates to) a nude photograph of Diane Webber, who we learn went on to pose for *Playboy*, the magazine edited by Hugh Hefner, who becomes one of the book's main characters. We see it in the third chapter of *The Bridge*, where Talese conjures up the first moments of the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge ("The bridge began as bridges always begin — silently"). The sixteen pages that follow are an elegant primer on the micro (the bridge's towers are "one and five-eighths inches farther apart at their summits than at their bases" to correct for the curvature of the earth) and macro ("188,000 tons of steel — three times the amount used in the Empire State Building") of bridge building. Reality may not always make sense in Talese's hands, but it damned well holds together. Reading his oeuvre — from *New York: A Serendipiter's Journey through A Writer's Life* — I have a sense, however fleeting, of living in a coherent, ordered world.

Knopf risks violating the Lanham Act in its marketing of *A Writer's Life*. Making a desperate attempt to recoup its enormous advance (\$7 million for three books, of which this is the second), the publisher is trumpeting it as one of those grand literary memoirs, a journalistic giant's amiable stroll through the triumphs of his career. A portrait of the handsome author, relaxed and confident, adorns the cover; the catalog copy is peppered with soothing banalities, describing the book as "luminous" and "dazzling." Nothing could be further from the truth.

A Writer's Life may be more a writer's book than a reader's. The stitching is more visible than in Talese's earlier work; the stream of reality minus its fictional undercurrents. Deprived of a strong narrator's presence, the four "books within the book" sit together a bit

uneasily. Talese opens and closes with his quest to write the story of Liu Ying, the Chinese soccer-star-as-muse, a subtle reminder that some stories never come to fruition. In between, he revisits Selma in 1990 to see how the civil rights struggle he chronicled for the *Times* in 1965 has fared — memories of which segued into a section on the oppressive conditions of his complaisant Italian forebears. We learn the history of 206 East Sixty-third Street, and particularly about its restaurants. Restaurants evoke the most graceful writing in the book. Sitting in Elaine's, he imagines a \$29 plate of flounder *meunière almandine* "coming to life, jumping off the fork, wiggling along the floor," swimming back in time to the Labrador Sea where it was caught. Restaurants are a potent metaphor for him. "I had two fathers . . . a residential father and a restaurant father. Only with the latter was I happy as a son," he writes. As an adult, after a solitary day battling his demons, he finds his redoubt in a restaurant. These excursions are less interesting in themselves than they are for what they tell us about Talese's struggles as a writer. They take us deeper and deeper inside his mind, which may be as daunting a trip as any of us has traveled.

Talese has always been a more exciting, difficult writer than either his critics or champions have given him credit for. He consistently confounds the stereotypes that have been foisted upon him. An Italian American whose mother hates to cook, he spends his childhood eating in mediocre restaurants and never cares to learn his father's native language. Despite growing up in a summer resort, he seldom swims or goes to the beach. *Honor Thy Father*, his book about life in the mafia, is, essentially, a social portrait of an inter-generational business. Hardly a shot is fired: *The Sopranos* as channeled through Henry James.

A Writer's Life is no different.

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Even its inviting title confounds our expectations. On the one hand it fits perfectly, for the book contains hardly a word about any aspect of Talese's life *other* than his writing. Any reader who opens the book expecting tidbits about Frank Sinatra, Joe DiMaggio, or the Mafia will be disappointed. On the other hand, the title is spectacularly, deliciously, misleading: Talese's book isn't about writing; it's about *not* writing — the painful, but necessary, *stage* of writing with which all veteran journalists are acquainted. Any real writer knows full well that one spends far more of his writing life "not writing" than writing.

A Writer's Life is not merely an account of the author's struggle, it is an homage, even a celebration of it. Talese's lack of productivity isn't the result of depression (as was the case with his friend William Styron, according to his memoir *Darkness Visible*) or indecision. No, he takes a more principled, Bartleby-like stand. "Am I blocked?" Talese wonders in a note to himself. No, he replies, he's "demonstrating concerns for readers in not burdening them with bad writing. More writers should be doing what you're doing — *not* writing It would be a good thing for the writers' reputations, for the publishers' production costs, and for the reading standards of the general public. There should be a National Book Award given annually to certain writers for *not writing*." Displaying equal parts pride and self-loathing, Talese reports he wrote barely fifty-four-and-a-half typed pages between 1995 and 1999. Any fool can write, but only the wisest of writers knows when not to. Although he doesn't come right out and say it, he implies that most writers' worth is inversely related to their productivity.

A serious point is buried beneath all this humor. The dirty little secret of publishing is that most books — even from prestigious

publishers and seasoned authors — are merely "product." Not egregiously bad (which would at least make them interesting), but simply mediocre work written to fulfill an overdue contract for a once-promising idea.

Talese's determination to avoid this fate may deprive Knopf of the bestseller it desires. But in writing an utterly original memoir, Talese has produced the least sentimental, most honest, unflinching ac-

With this utterly original memoir, Talese has produced the least sentimental, most unflinching account of the writing process I have ever read.

count of the reality of the writing process I have ever read. No victory laps for him. The man who describes "producing prose with the ease of a patient passing kidney stones" is relentlessly self-critical, castigating himself for the kinds of venial sins all writers have at one time or another committed.

He rears back in horror after ingratiating himself with Norman Pearlstine, then *Time's* editor in chief: "I was also appalled by the tone of false modesty in my final paragraph and the obviousness of my opportunism," he scolds himself. He writes openly about his desperation to revive his career by appearing in *The New Yorker*; he debases himself by wooing Lorena Bobbitt with inscribed copies of his books, in a vain attempt to rescue his assignment from oblivion. When Talese refers to his "ridiculous life as a prolific author of unfinished manuscripts," you don't doubt the emotions are sincere.

I would argue that it is this very quality — sincerity with a confessional twist — that has fueled America's love affair with the memoir. Our therapeutic culture enjoys

watching someone "work out" his problems in public; it leaves the reader with something like a therapy "contact high." Memoirs go down easy: one central character, facts that always fall into place, an uplifting resolution. The dark cloud hanging over the genre since James Frey (who, coincidence of coincidences, was published by Nan A. Talese) confessed to fabricating parts of his bestselling book, *A Million Little Pieces*, doesn't seem to have bothered Frey's readers, who continue buying copies at a furious rate. If they seem indifferent to the controversy perhaps it's because they are smart enough to know that memoirs are routinely fudged, even to the point of being written by someone other than their "author."

Reading memoirs has become so easy that we've forgotten that writing them should be hard. As philosophers and poets have told us for centuries, genuine self-knowledge is difficult, perhaps even impossible, to gain. In this respect, Talese is the anti-Frey, the reporter who acknowledges the challenge of the genre and is determined to surmount it. How? Well, by doing what he does best: returning to the scene again and again, interviewing and re-interviewing his subjects, conducting research, poring over his notes. Reporting, reporting, reporting.

In its fidelity to journalistic truth, *A Writer's Life* joins Joseph Lelyveld's *Omaha Blues* in what may be a new sub-genre: the reported memoir. For these writers, reporting the "story of the story" is as close to the truth as one can come. "I wondered whether there might not be ways for me to fall back on my trade and report out some obscure moments from earlier days that have lingered as pivotal," writes Lelyveld, who credits Michael Holroyd's "vicarious autobiography," *Basil Street Blues*, with inspiring him. Perhaps such books aren't as satisfying as literature, but at least you know what you're getting.

It is a rainy late January evening when Gay Talese opens the door to his home and immediately apologizes for the fact that our conversation will be delayed by half an hour. He is helping his wife prepare for a last-minute flight to Chicago to join Frey and a bunch of journalists on a live segment of *Oprah* in the morning. The talk-show host had championed Frey's book in the past. With its credibility in question, she wanted to revisit the issue of "truth in memoirs," according to her booker. (The truth, however, is that she's lured Frey's publisher to Chicago so that Nan can be sandbagged and perform the quintessential *Oprah*-esque ritual: confess, apologize, and plead for forgiveness.)

As it happens, "truth in memoirs" is precisely the topic I've come to discuss. Not that I'm questioning Talese's credibility. Far from it. In fact, my concern is the opposite. *A Writer's Life* is so bizarrely, nakedly truthful that I feel the need to do some reporting of my own. What does it mean to write a book about not being able to write a book, to produce an "impersonal" memoir so devoid of intimate details that he reprints passages from a 1992 *Vanity Fair* profile rather than discuss his marriage in his own words? ("I must recuse myself and defer to another writer," he explains.) A cynic might conclude that Talese had simply dumped the notebooks from his various works-in-progress. But he has too much integrity, and the book is too artfully constructed, for that to be the case.

After Nan's limousine picks her up, Gay and I turn to the tangle of circumstances that have led to this moment: the obsessively accurate author of a nonconfessional memoir married to the publisher of a confessional memoir by an obsessive fabricator. The whole scene strikes me as Talesian, dense with contradictory meaning and suggestive coincidences. Perhaps it's a Calabrian world after all.

The thing that most puzzles me about the book, I confess, is how someone so devoid of introspection would write a memoir in the first place. Nodding in thoughtful agreement, Talese goes on a digression — from Sinatra and the *Times*, through Liu Ying and the nineties ("the worst decade of my life") — that lasts nearly half an hour. I finally see an opportunity to interrupt.

"But how could you never have given any thought to who you are? Weren't you depressed by that?" I ask.

In response, he tells me about his psychoanalysis with Dr. Peter Neubauer, "one of the renowned Freudians in New York." It was the mid-eighties, and Talese was having problems writing *Unto the Sons*. After several sessions, the analyst offered a diagnosis. "You know what your problem is," he said, "you're a *perfectionist*. You should just let it go." Talese was incredulous. "I can't just *let it go*,"

he replied. "I'm a tailor. Stitch, stitch, stitch. Then rip it out and do it again. Just the way I saw my father do."

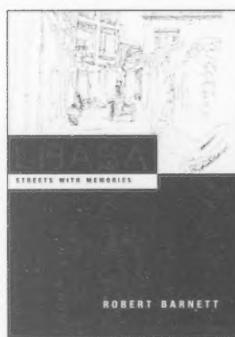
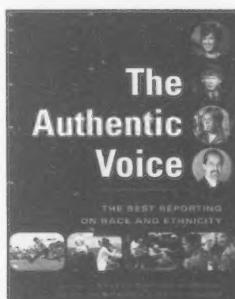
He smiles at the memory, and we both chuckle at the notion of a control-freak like Gay Talese "letting it go." The funny thing, though, is that in good Taleseian fashion, he returned day after day.

"But what did you talk about?" I ask.

"I was so involved in my book that I talked about that. I was paying him \$260 an hour to tell him about my characters. I told him about Joseph Garabaldi and Napoleon's brother-in-law, General Jaques Mourat. And he was very interested because he was learning a lot. Hell, I couldn't even get to myself in *therapy*." ■

Robert S. Boynton is the director of New York University's magazine journalism program and author of *The New New Journalism*.

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CHRIS LEHMANN ON *DO YOU SINCERELY WANT TO BE RICH?*
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COURTESY: THE AUTHORS

CHARLES RAW, GODFREY HODGSON, AND BRUCE PAGE

As any follower of the grim judicial endgame of the Enron affair knows, the investment world can morph, at its speculative outer limit, into an empire of sandcastles. Fabulous sums of shareholder value wash away with the brutal ebb tide of a market correction, and before you know it, some \$60 billion in shareholder value and employee pensions are good and sunk.

The real wonder, though, is how the financial press keeps

missing the casual brigandry of the Kenneth Lays, Jeffrey Skillings, and Andrew Fastows in real time. Business writers had, after all, designated Enron the poster company for the brave new age of energy

We talk of books standing the test of time. SECOND READ is an exploration of that maxim — journalists reflecting on books that shaped their own work, or whose lessons remain relevant.

deregulation, routinely hymning its many market wonders until a *Fortune* scribe named Bethany McLean — thanks to a tip from a short-seller — noticed the distinct scent of eyewash arising from the company's 2001 money prospectus. And so it has been with other failed and flailing wonder speculators, from Tyco and Imclone all the way back to the 1920s Florida real-estate bubble.

Whenever a speculative enterprise swerves confidently into fairyland, reporters tag along to marvel uncritically at the view; and

whenever said enterprise crashes to the ground, it is just as credulously treated as something entirely new under the sun. To save embarrassment all around, these speculative collapses are subsequently treated as the handiwork of but a few greedy, misguided, or delusional bad actors. Like Messrs. Lay, Skilling, and Fastow, they may pay their individual criminal debt to society, but they will studiously stiff their employees and shareholders with the bulk of their paper-generated ru-

ination, as press observers look on with tacit, self-flattering disdain for the many poor suckers drawn into the disastrous wake of it all. If the informal motto of the American financial press atop a bubble is "What, me worry?" it becomes, when conditions of financial gravity are restored, "Rubes? Who, us?"

All of which makes the reappearance of *Do You Sincerely Want to Be Rich?* a splendid market correction in its own right. First published in 1971, the book

all these respects — though most of all by virtue of the principled reporterly skepticism in which the authors told the IOS tale, in both real time and retrospect — *Do You Sincerely Want to Be Rich?* is a model of lively financial writing that journalistic specialists would do well to study and emulate.

IOS was a financial colossus entirely suited to its age. Toward the end of the postwar investing boom, stockbrokers boasted that they were "gunslingers" and

Whenever a speculative enterprise swerves confidently into fairyland, reporters tag along to marvel uncritically at the view.

is the fruit of some five years' worth of dogged investigative work from Charles Raw, Bruce Page, and Godfrey Hodgson of *The Sunday Times* of London. *Do You Sincerely Want to Be Rich?* is a financial farce worthy of Nathaniel West, or perhaps David Mamet on acid. It is, in short, an exhaustive study of one of the strangest financial success stories of the swinging 1960s, Bernie Cornfeld's Investors Overseas Services.

Raw, Page, and Hodgson attend with admirable clarity to the many fathomless mysteries of IOS balance sheets and their sweeping vistas of leveraged debt, but they also painstakingly reconstruct the go-go money culture of the 1960s that made such a mad enterprise possible. Just as important in a book often thick with forensic accounting detail, they relate the crazed IOS chronicle in an engaging narrative tone of stolid empirical bewilderment, nicely captured in chapter subheads composed in the voice of satirical Victorian novels: "in which respectable financiers strip off their watch chains and leap into the warm offshore waters . . . IOS, on the basis of a very curious prospectus, becomes a public corporation at long last." In

began to herd investors accordingly into visions of higher investor returns and lower tax rates in far-off lands, well beyond the grid of square, flatfoot regulators such as the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Bernie Cornfeld was in many ways the age's premier gunslinger — certainly a spur-jangling pioneer in an investing scene still dominated by blue-chip brokerages. Though Cornfeld gave precious little thought to the notion at the time, when he first alighted in Paris in 1955, alongside all sorts of other misfit American expats, he was launching a new phase in the accelerating modern wonder of mobile capital. It was the moment when money could functionally secede from nationhood; indeed, as it continued sprawling across the globe, IOS assumed the character of a cash-rich antistate, a collection of offshore transactions that, as the authors write, "should be as far as possible untaxed, unregulated, and uncontrolled." This meant that IOS fund managers were sort of colonial bottom feeders, erecting their counter empire "out of the juridical anomalies left over by the Holy Roman Empire and the colonial systems of Spain,



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SECOND READ

IDEAS & REVIEWS

the Netherlands and Great Britain." For all of the fund's hectically advertised market sophistication, the reasoning behind IOS's global growth was baby simple, the authors write: Since investment regulations took root in the aftermath of a global depression, they mirror the belief of every Western government "that uncontrolled financial speculation is a danger to the stability of the State. Ultimately, what IOS did was to get around virtually every control designed to prevent speculation getting out of hand."

The follies of the past link up directly to the crimes of successive ages.

IOS was a pioneer of the offshore franchise, and true to its founding vision, it routinely repurposed its corporate identity so as to better exploit those spots around the globe that offered minimal regulation and/or law enforcement. A few years after Cornfeld launched the fund, IOS had to hotfoot it out of France when the authorities wanted to restrict its postal privileges. Cornfeld promptly shifted operations to Switzerland, but eventually ran afoul of that corporate paradise when the Swiss authorities began lustling after the fund's incorporation revenues. (Cornfeld, of course, had procured for IOS a "brass plate address" in Panama, where it could operate virtually tax-free.) Rather than relinquish those tax breaks to the Swiss, Cornfeld actually split his home office and moved half of it back to France, while also maintaining a Swiss arm mainly for the prestige value it offered IOS sales reps as they courted global investors who wanted all manner of financial secrecy to conceal all manner of financial trespasses against their home-nation laws.

IOS's chosen vehicle was the

comparatively new financial instrument known as the mutual fund. The singular inspiration of IOS was to wed the flexibility of mutual funds to a globalizing investment community just beginning to stir to a fitful recognition of its own potential might. In short order, IOS went from being a minor franchise of a New York-based mutual fund into a hydra-headed financial shape-shifter, built on little more than the simple idea of liquid capital. It could be virtually all things to all people. In the new global financial

globe. Hodgson, Raw, and Page bring a proper note of horrified fascination to their portrait of Cornfeld. They recognize that, much as IOS serves up a parable on the follies of unregulated capitalism without borders, Cornfeld was a veritable random search engine for bullshit theories of social leveling through investment.

To be sure, there had been a good deal of placid trickle-down boosterism in the market boom of the 1920s, whose essence was neatly distilled in the General Motors executive John J. Raskob's 1929 *Ladies' Home Journal* essay "Everybody Ought to Be Rich." But the IOS credo, quoted in the title of Raw, Page, and Hodgson's corporate biography, sported more than just the whiff of 1960s-era authenticity. In his more hectic, prophetic moments, Cornfeld cast himself as a vessel of full-blown social revolution. A former Socialist Youth League member who campaigned for the Socialist Party presidential candidate Norman Thomas and graduated from college with a degree in social work, Cornfeld routinely touted his bundle of mutual funds as a heroic blow struck against the brittle oligarchy of The Man, on behalf of the Common Investor. "World-Wide People's Capitalism" was the struggle he celebrated, and his rhetoric took on a glow that the authors describe as "positively Messianic": "'The service we perform is vital not only to our economic system,'" Cornfeld preached, "'but in a real sense it contributes to the survival of the democratic process.'"

Cornfeld's success was as striking for the character of his sales force as it was for the ripe military clientele they approached. He recruited his first cohort of salesmen from among the American expat community. In the Paris of the 1950s, as the authors write, this was "a tolerant society: a mildly Bohemian life-style was expected, and some vague stirring of political radicalism was almost

demanded. It was a world of frustrated intellectuals, mild neurotics, political nonconformists, and cultural misfits — with the occasional drunk or homosexual." Conceptual salesman that he was, Cornfeld's other breakthrough was to mint these wayward souls into an echt-60s sales force, versed in the motivational psychology that freed Cornfeld, a veteran of a number of encounter groups devoted to Alfred Adler's "rational therapy" movement, of his stateside neuroses. This reclamation project was likely a fulfillment of a "deep need" of Cornfeld's own, the authors write, "for it carried the promise that his recruits would become devoted followers of the man who could perform an act of liberation for them. In the beginning, Investors Overseas Services sometimes seemed more like a therapeutic community than a money-making device."

An ancillary but far from negligible virtue of *Do You Sincerely Want to Be Rich?* is that it supplies a much-needed corrective to the stubborn mythology of the 1960s as an idealistic near-utopian era of cultural radicalism, in which the counterculture was by definition also countermaterialistic. The strange career of IOS points up very much the opposite trend, in which liberated nouveau Bohemian salesmen racked up absurdly inflated fees and rewarded themselves with lavish homes, vehicles, and retinues of models — all on the example of Great Leader Cornfeld, who commanded at the height of the IOS scam a genuine Swiss villa and his own jet. So tightly does the IOS saga merge the money culture and the let-it-all-hang-out dogma of sixties liberationism that *Do You Sincerely Want to Be Rich?* often reads like an extended finance-world appendix to Thomas Frank's study of the sixties "creative revolution" in American advertising, *The Conquest of Cool*. In both Frank's saga and this one, one appreciates that the jargon of maxi-

mum liberation was little more than a fig leaf concealing the hoary quest for Croesus-like excess.

Yet the quest for all manner of ultra-hip, ultra-global gratification turned back in on itself in curious ways, as IOS continued pursuing the main moneyed chance wherever it might lead. For one thing, the great wide world of investing proved on inspection to be disconcertingly small, especially when it came to the range of motion available to the masters of the IOS universe once they ran out of options.

For another, great wealth seems always and everywhere to confer an equally great longing for cultural respectability. So as IOS acquired its far-flung isthmus of extralegal offshore investments — ranging from Africa to South America to the Middle East — it also hotly coveted an image as a clearinghouse for great charitable pursuits, deep public thoughts, and the eminent personages who make all such things happen. Via a friendship with Barney Rosset, president of Grove Press, Cornfeld was able to engineer a most ironic coup by recruiting James Roosevelt — the eldest son of the president who created IOS's great institutional nemesis, the Securities and Exchange Commission — to serve on the IOS board. Roosevelt *filis* was also to act, more informally, as a troubleshooting ambassador of good will to the many nations where IOS found itself running afoul of the law or the ruling financier class.

Then there was Pacem in Terris, the global peace conference that IOS sponsored in its highest-flying phase. The authors dub it, most accurately, a "solemn farce" involving representatives convened from seventy different nations at Geneva's swank Intercontinental Hotel on May 28, 1967. Among its other difficulties, the authors note, the peace-themed gathering "coincided with a resumption of American bombing

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in Vietnam and with the outbreak of the Six-Day War in the Middle East." Among the assembled unwitting luminaries were John Kenneth Galbraith, Senator William Fulbright, a Swiss cardinal, and the editor of *Le Monde*. (Galbraith was able to serve up some delayed rehabilitation to his reputation by lavishly praising *Do You Sincerely Want to Be Rich?* upon its original release in a review for *The Washington Post*.)

The great day of disillusionment came in 1969, shortly after IOS floated its initial public offering, a move that is hard to square with any notion of consensual financial reality. For IPOs are the great invitation for shareholders of all descriptions to cash in — to redeem plentiful stock shares as other investors rally to capitalize a growing company. But IOS was not, by then, really growing at all. Fully \$8 million of the \$52 million raised in the IPO went instantly to shareholder redemptions, meaning that IOS was quite literally mortgaging its future against its rapidly contracting present. Cornfeld's frantic right-hand man Cowett promptly launched a clandestine, and probably illegal, campaign to buy up some \$11 million in IPO shares in an effort to keep the stock price — launched at \$10 a share — artificially high.

It failed. Global stock markets were contracting in 1969 anyway, and IOS was at the most exposed edge of every sort of market imaginable. Cornfeld and his corporate board still prayed for deliverance in the form of a deal with John McCandish King, a Denver-based financier who made his millions in exploiting tax breaks to oil investors — and producing precious little black gold in the process. Indeed, the IPO, in its most fundamental particulars, was a tissue of lies, placing IOS profits at \$25 million for 1969 — \$10 million of which being purely speculative returns from King's forever-speculative oil holdings. Later inquiries disclosed that more than \$7 million of that figure was fed into shell-game-style loans among IOS board members to leverage hot new acquisitions that

usually went into their own profit-challenged deep freezes upon acquisition. An adjusted audit would show a \$10.2 million profit, the authors write — and nearly all of that in the highly hypothetical form of paper profits on King's oil fields; take that away, Hodgson, Raw, and Page reckoned, and the company made "virtually nothing" in the big breakout year of 1969. A somewhat more sober reckoning came courtesy of the one honest accountant on the scene, Mel Lechner, who announced a still-optimistic \$17.9 million profit in 1969 — and losses of between \$7 million and \$13 million in the first half of 1970 alone.

Once those unforgiving numbers surfaced, the stock tanked, and board members voted Cornfeld out of his leadership post. They also approved a takeover bid from King, but SEC rules barred him from the position. So in 1970, control of IOS passed to the takeover magnate Robert Vesco, who would later gain no small renown as the bankroller of some of Richard Nixon's shadier extramural initiatives. Vesco would eventually be accused of embezzling more than \$200 million from IOS funds, and then launched his own expat career to avoid SEC prosecution. He is now serving a long sentence in a Cuban prison.

All of which makes a fitting epitaph for an investment empire founded originally on the giddy bohemian quest for the global main chance. It's also a critical reminder — one among many in this absorbing, sprawling saga of delusional chicanery on a worldwide scale — that the follies of the past link up directly to the crimes of successive ages. We do well to ponder such matters as we await the Enron verdict, and its attendant official assurances that the slate is wiped clean, that American markets need never fear the accession of another Ken Lay. With *Do You Sincerely Want to Be Rich?* finally back in print, we should have less reason than ever to buy into that speculative forecast. ■

Chris Lehmann is an editor at Congressional Quarterly and the author of *Revolt of the Masscult*.

IDEAS & REVIEWS

BOOKS



BUY A TV, BREATHE DEEPLY

A sober look at how the coal industry spins 'clean' coal, then pursues business as usual — foul the air, buy influence

BIG COAL, THE DIRTY SECRET BEHIND AMERICA'S ENERGY FUTURE
by Jeff Goodell
Houghton Mifflin, 320 pp. \$25.95

BY SUSAN Q. STRANAHAN

In early January, Americans were exposed to a dose of reality TV, delivered by a group of men who daily risked their lives to feed the nation's appetite for iPods, Blackberries, and PlayStations.

As viewers watched and the media hovered, emergency crews labored to locate and rescue thirteen miners trapped 260 feet below ground. More than forty hours after an explosion rocked the Sago Mine in West Virginia, word flashed from a garbled radio transmission to cell phones, to waiting families, and finally to the hordes of reporters encamped nearby that the thirteen men were safe. An impromptu celebration erupted. It was a made-for-TV moment, eerily similar to the klieg-lighted rescue three-and-a-half years earlier of nine men trapped for seventy-seven hours in the flooded Quecreek mine in Pennsylvania. But three hours later came the grim pronouncement from Sago: twelve men dead, one miner barely alive.

Last year, the Sago mine pro-

duced almost 508,000 tons of coal, a mere .05 percent of the nation's annual consumption of one billion tons. The twelve miners who died at Sago — and thirteen others who have been killed in coal mining accidents so far this year — are, in the crudest of tallies, merely the cost of keeping the nation's power plants humming.

After a tragedy like Sago, politicians point fingers and wring their hands about the hazards of mining. "Mine safety is a moral imperative," said Senator Robert Byrd of West Virginia shortly after the Sago accident. "These miners ought not to be considered expendable." But they are. They return to their dangerous jobs (operations resumed at Sago ten weeks after the blast) and Americans buy more microwaves, laptops, and flat-screen TVs.

From the earliest days of mining, there has been a disconnect between the cost of coal and our voracious consumption of it. Even the occasional jolt of reality — like Sago — fails to diminish our appetite. Coal will shape our "economic destiny," says George W. Bush.

But at what price?

That's the question Jeff Goodell tackles in *Big Coal, The Dirty Secret Behind America's Energy Future*. His answer: America's addiction to coal — like its addiction to foreign oil — is a pact with the devil that has lulled us into perilous complacency while it despoils the world around us. "The most dangerous aspect of our continued dependence on coal," Goodell writes, "is not what it does to our lungs, our mountains, or even our climate, but what it does to our minds: it preserves the illusion that we don't have to change our thinking." The question that must be answered is this, he says: "How much risk are we, as a society, willing to take in pursuit of cheap energy?"

Goodell, a contributing editor at *Rolling Stone* and the author of several books, was dispatched to the coal fields of West Virginia in 2001 by *The New York Times Magazine* to report on coal's comeback in the wake of George Bush's election. West Virginia, a historically Democratic state, had provided what could be seen as Bush's margin of victory in 2000. Goodell, like others who have encountered the dangerous and insular world of coal mining, was captivated by "the rock that built America." He knew he was onto a good story.

After writing the *Times* piece, Goodell spent three years reporting and writing *Big Coal* — three of the four hottest years on record,

he notes. Much of the information he gathered is not new, but he has assembled it deftly, like a prosecutor laying out the counts in a powerful indictment. The result is persuasive journalism at its best — hard facts recounted in decidedly human terms. Goodell succeeds by seamlessly weaving together the political and economic issues and the health and environmental costs of coal.

Describing the human and environmental devastation wreaked by mining in West Virginia, for example, Goodell writes, "The 13 billion tons of coal that have already been dug out of the state have brought little more than heartache and poverty. *But if you will just let us blast one more mountain, haul out one more trainload of coal, everything will be okay.* The irony — and genius — of this argument is that the farther the state's economy declines, the more potent the argument becomes."

The coal industry — and its allies, the railroads and power companies — wield enormous clout in Washington and in mining states. In coal-rich, dirt-poor Mingo County, West Virginia, drinking water supplies are heavily contaminated with toxic metals, yet state and federal officials pay little heed. "The coal companies control everything down here," a local doctor told Goodell. "They just do whatever they want."

The same is true in Washington, which is the payoff for years of political contributions to members of both parties from coal and its pals. Look no further than Appalachia, where mountain-top mining is flattening the landscape. The practice — which involves lopping off mountains to reach buried coal seams — became practical (and legal) thanks to a few word changes in federal mining rules. The debris from mountain-top removal was simply reclassified from objectionable "waste" to legally acceptable "fill," a semantic leg-

erdomain by an Interior Department official who, before 2000, had been a coal-industry lobbyist. Eventually, an area larger than Rhode Island may be reshaped.

The coal industry has lived off taxpayers' largess for decades, sucking up subsidies by the billions. "Big Coal is much better at touting new technology than actually putting it to work," Goodell writes. Consider the quest for "clean coal," the ultimate oxy-

compellingly of the impending "economic hurricane of global warming." With its allies in the White House, and its spinmeisters on Madison Avenue, "Big Coal's goal is to keep us comfortable, not curious," explains Goodell. "It's not hard to understand why. Coal is by far the most carbon-intensive of all fossil fuels . . . so any limits on CO₂ — carbon dioxide — "emissions will hit coal hardest."

In the absence of tough emis-

Clean coal is nothing but an 'expensive political decoy,' the ultimate oxymoron.

moron. Clean coal is nothing more than "an expensive political decoy."

It's not just the mining companies who wield power; coal users also carry huge political muscle. Goodell profiles the Southern Company, supplier of electricity from coal to much of the Southeast. Southern is known as "the *T. rex* of the power industry," not only because of its size but also for its "prehistoric" attitudes toward air pollution. Southern and its affiliates contributed \$4.4 million to national parties and candidates between 2000 and 2004; during the 2000 election, at least five Bush Pioneers (fund-raisers who brought in at least \$100,000 in contributions) were Southern Company executives or lobbyists.

Is it any wonder, Goodell asks, that the American landscape is still dotted with what he calls the "big ditties" — coal-fired plants that belch out tens of thousands of pounds of dangerous pollutants? Half of all Americans live in areas where air pollution levels exceed national health standards. But not all pollutants are created equal; coal-fired power plants annually pump forty-eight tons of mercury into the air, among other toxins. One in twelve women of childbearing age already has an unsafe level of mercury in her blood.

The bill is coming due very soon, warns Goodell, who writes

sion controls, new coal-fired plants are being thrown up around the globe. Goodell takes us to China, "the world's premier coal junkie," which is in line to surpass the gluttonous U.S. as the largest greenhouse-gas polluter in the world. American energy companies, meanwhile, have descended on the country touting "new" and "better" technologies for consuming coal.

Despite what the coal industry would like us to believe, the solutions to climate change are not technological, but political. "Right now, the biggest impediment to change . . . is the idea that we are dependent on the very thing that is killing us," Goodell concludes. "Those arguments amount to nothing less than blackmail."

Back in January, as the media kept vigil at the Sago mine, more than one commentator expressed surprise that people actually were still engaged in the dangerous and primitive business of prying coal from deep inside the Earth — and that America was so dependent upon their efforts. Before the next mining disaster — and there will be one — let's hope they read *Big Coal* and learn just how addicted we are. ■

Susan Q. Stranahan wrote about national and regional environmental issues for The Philadelphia Inquirer for twenty-eight years. She is the author of Susquehanna, River of Dreams.

BOOK REPORTS

IDEAS & REVIEWS

BY JAMES BOYLAN

THE MAN WHO INVENTED FIDEL: CUBA, CASTRO, AND HERBERT L. MATTHEWS OF THE NEW YORK TIMES
by Anthony DePalma
PublicAffairs
308 pp. \$26.95

The title suggests that this might be still another dismemberment of beat-up old Herbert Matthews of *The New York Times*, in his grave for nearly thirty years. But it was Matthews himself who asserted that he was the inventor, having created Fidel Castro in a dramatic and admiring interview with the insurgent leader, previously reported dead, in Cuba's Sierra Maestra on February 17, 1957. The interview, published in the *Times*, helped set Castro on his road to power, and made Matthews an easy scapegoat for America's troubles in Cuba. For his part, Matthews refused to turn against the Cuban revolution, and insisted, against increasing resistance within his newspaper, that it be reported fully and understandingly. The embarrassed *Times* placed Matthews in a kind of working exile that lasted until his retirement in 1967. Anthony DePalma of the *Times* became interested in restudying the Matthews story after preparing an obituary-in-waiting of Castro. He has found new veins of drama and complication in the old story and presents Matthews in a sympathetic but not exculpatory light, seeing in him both the courage and the flaws of the old-fashioned correspondent, to whom objectivity is just an eleven-letter word. In a memorandum just before the Bay of Pigs fiasco in 1961, Matthews wrote that judgment on what he had done might take fifty years. DePalma's study should help make that judgment more just.

GLAUCO DELLA SOLCUA



HORACE GREELEY: CHAMPION OF AMERICAN FREEDOM
by Robert C. Williams
New York University Press
424 pp. \$34.95

There was only one Horace, but there have been many biographies. This new one comes, refreshingly, from outside journalism. It was written by a veteran historian whose starting point was his interest in understanding the words "liberty" and "freedom," and the distinctions between them. Williams found that much of the nineteenth-century discussion of these concepts flowed through a single figure, Horace Greeley (1811-1872). Not only did Greeley himself contribute to the discussion, but the *New-York Tribune*, the newspaper he founded in 1841, was a sluice gate through which flowed streams of debate. Williams captures Greeley not only as the white-haired, badly dressed odd duck, but also as a formidable presence — outspoken but not quarrelsome, ambitious but principled, fearless but not reckless. Greeley started as a Whig, migrated through pseudo-

socialism, aligned himself with the new antislavery Republican Party, and finally ran for president as a dissident in 1872 when he thought, correctly, that the Republicans had become corrupt. Weeks after losing the election, he died and received the honors of a great statesman. Williams faces heavy going in stuffing this book with Greeley's many opinions and positions, and sometimes he seems to be gasping, but for the most part he conveys well an era in which politics was many-hued, rather than merely red and blue.

WOMEN AND THE PRESS: THE STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY
by Patricia Bradley
Foreword by Gail Collins
Medill School of Journalism/Northwestern University Press
355 pp. \$22.95 paper

Patricia Bradley, a communications professor at Temple University, seeks to sail through more than 250 years in this relatively short book, one of a new series on the press to be issued by the Medill School. Bradley defines what she sees as the woman journalist's agenda: "seeking economic parity, establishing individual worth, and fulfilling a responsibility to women at large." Obviously, some of the hundreds of women she mentions favored one goal or another — that is, prosperity, or celebrity, or virtue. A few managed to balance all three. Curiously, the book ends with a bouquet to Judith Miller of *The New York Times*, who "remains in jail to protect one of the profession's most valued principles." Bradley adds: "We may consider that any one of the women who preceded her would have willingly gone in her stead, and the same can be said for the many more women who now follow." Line up over there.

IDEAS & REVIEWS

PASSAGES

CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION: L.A.

On Wednesday night, November 10, 2004, Leslie Moonves and several of his top executives sat in the ballroom of the Beverly Wilshire Hotel in Los Angeles. They were attending a dinner, a fund-raiser for a Jewish charity.

Moonves and his guests had just settled down at the table after the cocktail hour. It was approaching 8 p.m.; in the eastern and central time zones, prime time was just coming to a close.

Les and his colleagues had reason to be confident. Their Wednesday night was on the rise, mainly because of *C.S.I.: NY*. The show had started strong, beating *Law & Order* the first weeks of the season, but NBC's old warhorse had come back more recently.

Just a couple of minutes until 8, Kelly Kahl felt the vibration from his BlackBerry and pulled it out to check the message. A contact in New York was e-mailing him that the news department had preempted the final five minutes of that night's episode of *C.S.I.: NY* during the East Coast feed because of a news flash. Palestinian leader Yassir Arafat had died.

"I can't believe this," Kelly said. When he told Moonves that CBS News had taken *C.S.I.: NY* off the air for a bulletin about Arafat, Les, by his own account, "went crazy." As the full ramifications of what had occurred sank in, Moonves's fury rose. Every viewer in the country's two biggest time zones would have missed the ending to that night's *C.S.I.* plot, meaning they would not know who the killer was. And for what? Arafat had been dying for weeks. Moonves and Andrew Heyward, the president of CBS News, had decided weeks earlier that at most, CBS would run



CBS

a twelve-second crawl at the bottom of the screen informing viewers that the Palestinian leader had died and they could get more information on their next newscast.

In this case, the damn local newscast was only five minutes away. A memo had gone out describing all of this in detail. Who inside CBS News had dared to pull a stunt like this, in direct contradiction of his orders?

Taking out his cell phone, Les pushed his way through the tables to a quiet place outside the ballroom and dialed New York. "How could this happen?" Moonves demanded with vehemence when Heyward got on the line. Heyward explained that the news executive in charge had the authority to take the air; that was the only prudent thing in case of a momentous event.

Still steaming, Moonves said,

"How many people have the ability to say take that off the air and put this on the air?" Heyward guessed it might be as many as twenty-five people.

Moonves was stunned. This was simply too much. It was one more example of CBS News people being full of themselves, feeling like they were superior to the people in the entertainment division and everyone else in the company. And this incident was occurring only two months after CBS News had been forced to withdraw its backing of a *60 Minutes II* report accusing President Bush of shirking his National Guard duty. After that disgrace, Les decided that the people in CBS News were not only not superior to everyone else at the network, they were responsible for tarnishing the good image of the rest of CBS. Now, CBS News people were senselessly preempting the network's most important new show.

To Moonves, it only made it worse that he was learning about this outrageous act of stupidity while attending, of all things, a Jewish charity event. When he got back to the table, Moonves told the CBS group: "We were fucked by Arafat again."

from DESPERATE NETWORKS

by Bill Carter

Doubleday, 416 pp. \$26.95

D.C. SPOKESWOMEN DON'T WEAR PLAID

Several days later, I headed up to the 0600 operations meeting with Rumsfeld, Myers, and other senior military and civilian staff. As people shuffled for caffeine and seats, the SecDef came in and headed over to the coffee wearing a bright red fleece vest and a rich purple and red tie. It looked pretty sharp.

"Very spiffy attire today, sir," I said as I moved to let him get at the coffee. Without looking up as he poured, the SecDef said quietly, "I wore it for you." I had no idea what he meant, so I asked him.

"Well, given the Style section story today, Joyce thought I should wear this in solidarity." I hadn't read the Style section since early

2001, so I repeated myself. "I have no idea what you're talking about."

"Oh," he said, "Then you'd better take a look at the paper." I didn't worry much about his comments. After all, I thought, how bad could something in the Style section be?

I called George Rhynedance, my senior military assistant, on the way back. "What's up with the Style section?" I asked. "Oh, it's bad," he said. "It" was a huge Style section piece that covered — in great detail — my choice of clothing. It included heavy criticism for what some people saw as inappropriate attire, given the seriousness of my surroundings and responsibilities. The piece was too darn long to read — not that I had the stomach or the time for it anyway. But you couldn't miss the pictures — seemingly dozens of them — filling the inside page. The jacket that drew the most ridicule was a Louis Féraud that can only be described as asymmetrical patchwork. Some called it the "Partridge Family Bus" jacket; others thought it looked like a Mondrian with buttons. What can I say? It was in my closet, so I wore it.

I sure didn't have the time to worry about the article at the time. And I certainly didn't expect what happened. All at once, our office got a flood of calls and e-mails from people whose emotions ranged from aggravation to outrage that the *Post* had focused on something as triv-

ial as my clothes at a time of war. They were young and old, male and female. They were average citizens and senior correspondents from across Washington and the country. One of the best reporters in Washington said she was going to call Donny Graham, the publisher of the *Post*, and "tell him just how despicable this is." A *Post* reporter emailed me with "I thought we had covered every aspect of this war. I was SOOOOO wrong!"

I was stunned by the volume of responses. Lots of people wanted me — or others on my behalf — to respond in some fashion. But Rhynedance and I remained convinced that the best and obvious choice was not to engage. One reporter actually hunted down my mother in Sewickley, Pennsylvania, to get her reaction to the "scandal," as he called it. It never occurred to me that the story might be a big deal, so I hadn't given her or my dad a heads-up. Anyhow, the reporter filled in my mother and asked for her reaction.

"Well," she said, demonstrating that common sense and quick thinking are the best communication skills out there, "if that's the meanest thing they ever say about Torie, I think she'll be okay." I was. The next day I wore purple.

from **LIPSTICK ON A PIG**

by Torie Clarke
Free Press, 241 pp. \$26

THE DANCE OF THE BOLD-FACED NAMES

Before the ball, friends and security experts had told Truman that he had to provide a secret entrance at the hotel so that his celebrity guests could evade the photographers and the reporters who were expected to congregate en masse outside the Plaza. Truman obligingly made the arrangements. At the end of the evening, after the last camera had been packed away and all the guests and the paparazzi had gone home, Truman realized that not a single person, famous or unknown, had made any attempt to use this entrance to avoid the press.

from **PARTY OF THE CENTURY:
THE FABULOUS STORY OF TRUMAN CAPOTE AND THE
BLACK AND WHITE BALL**
by Deborah Davis
John Wiley & Sons, 293 pp. \$24.95



DESPERATE MEASURES

In Shawn's latter days, in the early eighties, he began training Charles McGrath as his possible successor to the top — a better candidate, I believed, than the previously tapped Jonathan Schell or Bill McKibben, whom Shawn had been forced to abandon, to his great distress, when faced with strong opposition from much of the staff. Shawn, though well along in his ninth decade by now, did not want to go at all, of course, and the McGrath apprenticeship, like the others, languished on the vine. One afternoon, piqued and frustrated by the whole thing, Chip determined to force the issue after his eye had fallen upon a dilapidated life-size, cotton-stuffed dummy that had lately been kicking around the fiction department in various low poses and positions. Chip called me into his office on our twentieth floor, which by chance lay directly above Shawn's, on the nineteenth. "Listen," he said, his eyes wildly alight. "It's time for action. I'm dressing the dummy up in my shirt and tie and this old Press jacket. Then I get Shawn on the phone and say, 'Mr. Shawn, this is McGrath and I can't stand it *one more minute!* Look out your window' — and then, ZAM, here I come, straight down past him, with maybe a whole bunch of galley ties to my hand. That should settle things, wouldn't you think?"

"Do it," I said.
Only he didn't.

from **LET ME FINISH**
by Roger Angell
Harcourt, Inc.
304 pp., \$25

SCENE

Tea and Sympathy in China

BY RALPH JENNINGS

When bird flu hit the Chinese city of Tianjin in February 2004, I went there on assignment for Kyodo News with two friends from a Hong Kong newspaper. We wanted to report on the mass poultry graves and quarantines being used in China to control the disease. About twenty minutes into our walk through a dusting of white disinfectant powder, some official called the police. A smiling uniformed officer stopped us on a dirt road, took our ID cards, and called in a district foreign affairs director.

A foreign affairs car took us to the district government office, where we met with the district publicity chief, Yang Jin-song. He questioned us for about fifteen minutes and shook his head. "Very regrettable," he said three times. As foreign correspondents, we shouldn't have approached the ranchers without a Tianjin interview permit. We shouldn't have freely examined the charred and feathered burial plots in a cordoned area guarded by traffic police officers (one of whom had let us through).

Yang looked over at the foreign affairs guy, conferring in silence on what to do. "Let's eat lunch," Yang said. In a diner next door, our captors ordered a banquet — including chicken. Yang said: "We're not afraid to eat that," and he proved it. We chatted about nonsense until they sent us back to our news bureaus in Beijing.

Another incident occurred last summer at a hotel in the coastal city of Qinhuangdao. My colleagues and I were meeting with a group of laid-off workers — they had invited us there to talk about their demands for severance pay from a bankrupt military-uniform factory. Suddenly, three plainclothes officers stormed in, yelling, "Police!" We were told we should

have applied to the city foreign affairs office for permission to cover the dispute.

At Qinhuangdao city hall we were interrogated individually after stonewalling a panel of cops and foreign affairs officers. I worried about what they would do later to the laid-off workers, so even though my interrogator was courteous, I withheld everything. He called me uncooperative. Another officer erased digital photos that we'd been allowed to take hours earlier in the panel room (Kyodo News software resurrected some shots later). The day ended with a dinner invitation. We declined it and returned to Beijing.

That's about how almost every detention ends, at least for foreign reporters. I've been detained six times in the last two years and, for the most part, I've found gentle grilling more common than high-heat roasting. Chinese police, probably afraid of causing some kind of diplomatic incident, seldom touch foreign detainees except for an occasional come-this-way shoulder slap. They serve us water. No handcuffs. We can make cell-phone calls. We rarely need to remove or surrender anything but our IDs, which we get back.

After detaining me for two hours in early 2004 over random Shanghai street interviews about old houses being demolished for redevelopment, the interrogating officers apologized for wasting my time. When a Beijing officer detained me for talking to people outside the State Council citizen-complaint office in mid-2004, he helped my research by taking me through a typical complaint letter and explaining how citizens exaggerate their cases. In thirty minutes, I walked. **CR**

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Plainclothes policemen review the notes of a reporter detained in Qinhuangdao for talking to laid-off factory workers.

The Lower case



DANIEL AOKI/BLOOMBERG NEWS/LANDOV

Halliburton Says Unit Will Offer Shares

The New York Times 1/28/06

Should police alert schools of criminals?

The (Williamsburg) Virginia Gazette 2/1/06

Bush: U.S. Won't Deal With Hams

Courier-Observer (Massena/Potsdam, N.Y.) 1/27/06

Judges Appear More Lenient on Crack Cocaine

The Wall Street Journal 1/12/06

Thefts increase security

Palladium-Item (Richmond, Ind.) 2/25/06

Gerald M. Smith lives in Raleigh, N.C. He is a Manhattan ex-patriot fascinated with death, cemeteries, his native South, saloons and Joseph Mitchell.

Staten Island Advance 9/10/05

Bicyclist struck by car in fair condition

South Bend Tribune 5/23/05

Most state kids killed in crashes

The Lawton (Okla.) Constitution 12/24/05

Judge Francis McCaffrey then set bail at \$30,000 for Sherwood and was taken away after the hearing to the Rutland jail.

Rutland (Vt.) Herald 2/8/06

Backlash against casino swells

The Press Democrat (Santa Rosa, Calif.) 9/2/03

Police chase snakes through city

Chronicle-Tribune (Marion, Ind.) 3/4/06



In Albany, Executive Director of the State Division of Parole, Anthony Ellis, appeared before a state Assembly committee, after a Times Union investigation uncovered a secret "warrant quota" system that limited the number of arrests of parole violators. Parole officers are shown protesting Ellis' answers during his testimony in January.

Unlocking secret rules may free parole officers to make New York a safer state.

An anonymous phone call to Times Union reporter Brendan Lyons triggered an investigative series on problems in the New York State Division of Parole. Lyons' source described a secret "warrant quota" system that limited the number of parole violators officers could arrest. The system was apparently part of an effort to keep the prison population down. However, it resulted in crimes being perpetrated by parole violators who might have been locked up.

Lyons probed public court records and built a network of sources. He uncovered a trail of crimes, including knife attacks, rape and even the murder of a 14-year-old girl – all committed by parolees who had violated parole conditions, but weren't imprisoned.



Brendan Lyons
Investigative Reporter

Lyons' stories sparked response, but not the kind you would expect. Rather than fixing the defective system spotlighted by the Times Union, the Division of Parole tried to shut down the story. Pressure and intimidation were used on parole officers believed to have leaked information, but Lyons protected his sources by insisting they use pay phones and meet on weekends when they could not be trailed by Parole Division investigators.

Months later, the Times Union investigation reverberates. Responding to public outrage over the story, a state Assembly committee is investigating allegations. To read more, go to timesunion.com/specialreports/parole. Arming communities with knowledge that can protect their citizens is one more way Hearst Newspapers deliver excellence every day.



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